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this number.



"BUT WHAT AM I TO DO, THEN?" SHE SAYS INNOCENTLY.

"NO INTENTIONS."

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

Author of "Love's Conflict," "Veronique," etc.

CHAPTER III.

Colonel Mordaunt is the best specimen of a fine old English gentleman that Irene has ever come across. She sees that at the first glance. Of middle height, with a well-knit figure, florid complexion, good features, and hair with the lustre of grey satin on it, he presents all the outward qualifications that go to make up the

picture of a man of birth and breeding, and she takes a fancy to her new relative at once. Mrs. St. John, too, who is in an unusual state of flush and flutter, seems to have been quite overcome by the unexpected encounter.

"Is it not strange," she keeps on repeating, "that we should have met here—in Brussels—after so many years? Irene, my dear! you will welcome Colonel Mordaunt, I am sure, if only for your poor father's sake."

The girl comes forward with her hand extended, and the stranger, with old-fashioned politeness, and dead and gone chivalry, raises it respectfully to his lips.

"Poor Tom!" he murmurs as he does so; "poor Tom! I can trace a slight likeness to him as he was, even in your blooming face, my fair young cousin."

"She was always thought to have a look of him," sighs the mother, "but I scarcely imagined it was so apparent. Oh, Irene! you cannot think was a comfort it is for me to have stumbled on your cousin in this way—so weak and good-for-nothing as I am. You will never need to stay at home now for want of an escort—Colonel Mordaunt says he will be charmed to take you anywhere."

"With your own kind permission," interposes Colonel Mordaunt.

"You are very good," replies Irene. "Are you, then, staying in Brussels?"

"I am here for a few days, on my way back to England. I have been spending the summer at the Baths."

"Not remedially, I trust?" says Mrs. St. John, with a sudden anxious glance of interest at the robust-looking man who stands before her.

"Well, I cannot quite say no: though precautionary would be the better word. You remember our family tendency to gout, Mrs. St. John? Poor Tom used to have a twinge of it occasionally, and it was the complaint that carried off my grandfather. I have had one or two warnings during the last four years, and so I took advantage of the hot weather to put myself to rights for the season."

"The season!" echoes Mrs. St. John, to whom there is no season but one.

"The hunting season! It sounds very dreadful, does it not? but I fear there is no other season that conveys any interest to my ears. I am master of the hounds down in my part of Leicestershire, and spend my days between the stables and the kennel. It is a fine sport, Mrs. St. John, and a man must have something to do."

"Then I suppose you are anxious to get home again," remarks Irene.

"I was anxious to do so, I confess, but I have no intention of stirring now, so long as I can be of any use to you or to your mother."

"How kind!" murmurs Mrs. St. John; and her daughter adds, "I am afraid you will find shopping and sight-seenings very tame work for which to exchange the pleasures of the field, Colonel Mordaunt."

"Without their motive, perhaps—yes. With their motive, they can admit of no rivalry in my eyes!"

"What an extremely polite old gentleman!" exclaims Irene, as soon as the Colonel has disappeared. "However did you find him out, mother?"

"By the simplest accident in the world. He opened the door of my sitting-room in mistake for his own. I never was so surprised in my life. I nearly screamed!"

"Then you have met him before?"

"Yes—O yes!—of course—many years ago."

"But why have I never seen him, then? He says he lives in Leicestershire: why did he never come to my father's house?"

Mrs. St. John looks uneasy. She shifts about in her chair, and rolls up her satin cap-strings till they are ruined, and talks rapidly with a faint guilty color coming and going in her faded cheeks.

"Well, to tell you the truth, dear, your father and Colonel Mordaunt, although cousins, were not the best of friends; that is to say, they once



had a quarrel about something, and after that they ceased to visit each other."

"It must have been a serious quarrel to cause such a complete separation. Are you sure that Colonel Mordaunt was not the one in the wrong, mother? Would my father have liked us to become intimate with him again?"

Irene has a great reverence for the memory of her father; she is always questioning what he would or would not have wished them to do, sometimes to the ruffling of her mother's placid temper.

"Dear me, Irene! I should think you might trust me to judge of such matters! Do you think I would have introduced him to you otherwise? The disagreement had nothing to do with Colonel Mordaunt's conduct. He behaved extremely well throughout the whole affair. Only your father did not choose that the intimacy should be renewed."

"And yet he was his nearest relative."

"Quite the nearest. You know what a small family ours is—ridiculously small, in fact. Your great grandfather was a Baddenall, and his two daughters, co-heiresses, became respectively Mrs. Mordaunt and Mrs. St. John; and each left an only son—your father and this cousin. You see how absurdly it makes the family dwindle! There are females, of course, but they don't count—your own married aunts, you know; but Colonel Mordaunt's sister is still single. So you see, if you are to have any family at all on your father's side, it would be quite wrong not to make friends with this man, now that we have so happily fallen in with him again. And, indeed, the quarrel was about nothing that need concern you, Irene; nothing at all."

"I will take your word for it, mother. Colonel Mordaunt does not look like a man who would do a mean or dishonorable thing. And at all events, it is not necessary to quarrel for ever."

"It would be very wrong and senseless to do so. You will find him a most interesting companion; full of life and conversation, and with that charming deference in his manner towards women which one so seldom meets with in young men nowadays. They have not improved since the time when I was young."

"I suppose not," says her daughter, with a sigh; and then she laughs, quite unnecessarily, except to hide that sigh. "I really like Colonel Mordaunt, mother, and should be sorry not to be able to take advantage of his overtures of friendship. I think he is one of the handsomest old men I ever saw, and his manners are quite courtier-like."

"You should have seen him when he was young!" replies her mother, with an echo of the sigh that Irene was keen enough to check.

Colonel Mordaunt fully bears out the promise of his introduction. He is with them every day—almost every hour; he is at the beck and call of Irene St. John from morning until night.

If she desires to attend the Marché aux Fleurs at five o'clock A.M., to buy in flowers and fruit for the day's consumption, Colonel Mordaunt, faultlessly attired for the occasion, is waiting to attend her footsteps, even though it has cost him half his night's rest in order to be up and dressed in time.

Does she express a wish to visit the Quinconce, and push her way amongst a mob of Bruxellois at eight o'clock at night, or to attend opera or fete, still is the faithful gentleman ready to accompany his young cousin wherever she may choose to go, only anxious to be made use of in many ways, so long as the way accords with her own desires. And he is really no less desirable than pertinacious a chaperon, this Colonel Mordaunt; so highly respectable, as Irene laughingly declares: so thorough a gentleman, as sighs her mother, who has to be content to hear of his gallantry and not so share in it.

Set almost free by the companionship of Colonel Mordaunt, Irene St. John rushes about at this period far more than she desires. She is feverishly anxious to conceal from her mother the real pain that is gnawing at her heart, and poisoning every enjoyment in which she attempts to take a share: and she is madly bent on destroying for herself a remembrance that threatens to quench all that is worth calling life in her. So she makes plans, and Colonel Mordaunt backs them, until the two are constant companions. In a few days he seems to have no aim or desire except to please her; while she goes blindly on, expressing genuine surprise at each fresh token of his generosity.

One day she buys a huge bouquet, which he has to carry home, and tells him that she dotes on flowers.

The next, a basket of the rarest specimens that Brussels can produce lies on her table, with her cousin's kind regards.

"What exquisite flowers!" exclaims Mrs. St. John. "What he must have paid for them!" remarks her daughter, quite indifferent as to the motive of the offering.

But the next day the offering is repeated.

"More flowers!" says Irene: "what am I to do with them? There are no more vases, and the last are too fresh to throw away."

On the third day, a bouquet more beautiful than either of the others lies before her.

"Oh! this is too bad!" she exclaims, vexedly. "This is sheer waste! I shall speak to Colonel Mordaunt."

What does the speaking result in? An adjuration that no blossoms can be too fresh for one who is fresher herself that any blossom that ever grew in house or in field, etc., etc., etc.

"Stupid old fool!" is Irene's grateful, though unexpressed rejoinder. "The idea of taking everything I say as gospel! I declare I will never tell him I like anything again."

Yet she is pleased by the man's attention, though she hardly knows why. It soothes the pride which has been so sorely wounded: it makes her better satisfied, not with the world, but with herself. Colonel Mordaunt is not a brilliant conversationalist nor a deep thinker: he is quite content to follow her lead, and to echo her sentiments; but though he gives her no new ideas, he does not disturb the old ones, and she is not in a mood to receive new impressions. He is thoughtful, and generous, and anxious to please. He attends her, in fact, as a servant attends his mistress, a subject his queen: and all women, however broken-hearted they may be, dearly love to keep a retinue of slaves. Irene likes it: she is a woman born to govern, who takes submission to her as a right. It never strikes her that slaves may dare to adore.

Mrs. St. John receives Colonel Mordaunt's attentions to her daughter and herself with very different feelings. She is more than gratified by them—she is flattered. And if she can secure his undivided attention for an hour or two, she makes the most of it by thanks and confidences. One day Irene is lying down upon her bed with a headache, as she says—with a headache, as she might more correctly have expressed it—and Mrs. St. John has the Colonel to herself. It is a warm afternoon, and the heat and the agitation of the interview have brought a roseate hue into the old lady's face which makes her look quite handsome.

"Colonel Mordaunt—Philip—if I may still call you so—I have a great anxiety upon my mind."

"A great anxiety, my dear Mrs. St. John! if it is anything in which I can assist you—"

"I was sure you would say so! Yes; I think you can help me, or, at all events, it will be a comfort to consult you on the matter. I have so few friends in whom I can confide."

"Let me know what distresses you at once."

"It is about money. Oh! what a hateful subject it is, I believe money, either the want of it or the excess of it, to be at the bottom of almost every trouble in this world; and, though poor dear Tom left me very comfortably off yet—"

"You are in want of it? My dear friend, every penny I have is at your disposal!"

"How like you to say so! No; that would not help me. The fact is I have been spending more than my income since my husband's death—intrenching largely on my principal—much more largely than I had any idea of till I received my banker's book a few weeks back."

"But I thought my cousin left you so well off."

"Not nearly so well as the world imagines. He had indulged in several private speculations of late, and the loss of them preyed on his mind—sometimes I think it hastened his death; I know that at the last he was greatly troubled to think he could not leave us in better circumstances."

"But, my dear Mrs. St. John, excuse my saying so—considering it was the case, how could you be so foolish as to touch your principal, the only thing you and your daughter had to depend on?"

"Ah! it was foolish, wasn't it? but don't reproach me: you can't think how bitterly I am repenting of it now."

She lies back in her chair quite overcome by the idea, whilst Colonel Mordaunt sits by her side, silent and absorbed.

Suddenly Mrs. St. John starts up and clutches his hand.

"Philip! Philip! I am dying; and my girl will be left all but penniless."

"Good God! it cannot be as bad as that! You be mistaken, Mrs. St. John! You are weak and ill, and matters look worse to you than they really are. Put the management of your affairs into my hands, and I will see that they are set right again."

"It is beyond your power. You cannot think how mad I have been. When Tom died, and I found it would be impossible for us to live in the style to which we had been accustomed, I thought it would be better to give Irene a season or two in town—to let her be seen, in fact. She is so pretty she ought to have made a good marriage; and I never thought the money could run away so fast until I found it was nearly all gone."

"But who are your trustees? What have they been about to permit you to draw upon your principal in this manner?"

"There are no trustees. I am sole legatee and executrix. The money was left absolutely to me. I wish now it had not been so."

"And—and Irene," says Colonel Mordaunt, presently, "She is not then in a position to make the good match you speak of?"

"Ah! there's my worst trouble, Philip! I was so sure she was going to be married—such an excellent connection, too. I looked upon the matter as settled, and then it came to nothing."

Colonel Mordaunt's brow lowers, and he commences to play with the ornaments on the table.

"And who may the gentleman have been?"

"Well, I mustn't tell you, for my child's sake, for he behaved in the most dishonorable manner to her, Philip; dangled after her all the season, meeting her everywhere, and paying her the most undisguised attention, and then, when I felt bound to ask him what he intended by it all, turned round and said he had never considered her as anything more than a friend."

"The scoundrel!" cries Colonel Mordaunt, jumping up from his chair and pacing the room, "the unmitigated scoundrel! Mrs. St. John, let

me have his name and bring him to book, as he deserves."

"Ah! not for worlds. Irene would never forgive me! You cannot think how angry she was even at my asking him the question."

"And I suppose she—she—felt the business very much?"

"I cannot tell you. She assured me at the time that she was utterly indifferent to him; but I have had my suspicions since. Any way, it has broken my heart! To hear my child refuse in marriage by a man who had caused her name to be so openly connected with his own that it was quite unlikely any one else would come forward, and when I had been risking her dependence in order to further her prospects in life. I shall never recover it, Phillip; that blow has been the death of me."

"Why should you say so? You are not really ill."

"I am sinking fast, my dear friend; I am growing weaker every day; and very soon I shall be gone, and my Irene will have to suffer for my imprudence. Oh, Philip! for the sake of old times, promise me you will befriend my girl."

"For the sake of both past and present," he replies, warmly, "trust to me. I will do everything in my power to assist her. I am rich, as doubtless you know; the income which poor Tom and I equally inherited from our mothers has, in my case, never been fully used, for I have had no one to spend it on, and so long as I have a pound Irene shall never want one."

"Generous as of old. Ah, Philip! if I had only known what you were; if I had only had the sense—"

"My dear lady, what is the use of reverting to the past? You acted as you thought right. It has all been for the best."

"For the best that I should have deceived one of the noblest and most honorable of men?"

"Hush, hush! not deceived: you must not call it by so harsh a term," replies the Colonel, with the ready forgiveness which we find it so easy to accord to an injury for which we have long ceased to grieve; "you are too hard upon yourself. Remember how young you were."

"I should have been old enough to recognise your worth," replies the poor lady, who, like many of her fellow-creatures, has committed a great error on setting out in life, and never discovered her mistake until it was past remedy; "but it is something to know that I leave you Irene's friend."

"You may rest on that assurance with the greatest confidence," he replies, soothingly, and tells himself that the past, when the poor faded wreck of a woman who lies before him took back the hand she had promised to himself to bestow it on his cousin, will indeed be amply atoned for if he can only claim the friendship of the bright creature who has sprung from the union which went far to make his life a solitary one.

He really believes that he shall be satisfied with her friendship. So we deceive ourselves.

Mrs. St. John's conversation appears to be almost prophetic; at least, the state of mind which induced it naturally predisposes her to succumb to illness; and when, a few days after, she is seized with a low fever that is decimating the city, her weakness greatly aggravates the danger.

A foreign doctor is called in; he immediately proposes to bleed the patient; Irene flies in her distress to Colonel Mordaunt.

"He will kill my mother; what can I do to prevent it? Pray help me."

She is so lovely in her distress, with all thought of self vanished, and the tears standing in her great grey eyes, that it is as much as he can do to answer her appeal rationally.

"Be calm; I will not allow this Belgian rascal to touch her. I have already telegraphed to London. Mr. Pettingall will be here tomorrow."

"How can I ever thank you sufficiently?"

Mr. Pettingall arrives to time, and remains as long as his professional duties will permit, but he can do nothing. Mrs. St. John becomes unconscious, and sinks rapidly. It takes but a few days to accomplish that in which a robust body would have been fighting against for weeks. In a very short time Irene is awakened to a sense of her mother's danger, and in a very short time after that the danger is past—the illness is past—everything is past, indeed, except the cold, still figure lying on the bed where she had watched life fade out of it, and which will be the last thing of all (save the memory of a most indulgent mother) to pass away for ever.

Mr. Pettingall has returned to London by this time, and Irene and Colonel Mordaunt are alone. What would she have done without him?

Mrs. St. John has left no near relatives who would care to incur the expense of attending her funeral or personally consoling her orphaned daughter; two or three of them receive letters with an intimation of the event, to which they reply (after having made more than one copy of their answer) in stereotyped terms, interlarded with texts of Scripture and the places where they may be found and "made a note of." But not one pair of arms is held out across the British Channel (metaphorically speaking) to enfold Irene; not one pair of eyes weep with her; pens go and tongues wag, yet the girl remains, save for the knowledge of Colonel Mordaunt's help and presence, alone in her sorrow.

During the remainder of that sad week she sits almost entirely in her mother's room; confident, though he has not told her so, that everything that should be done is being done by the man who has expressed himself so kindly towards her; and when, on the day of the

funeral, she meets him again, she feels as though he were her only friend.

When the interment is over and they have returned to the hotel, Colonel Mordaunt remarks how pale and worn the girl has become, and ventures to ask what care she has been taking of her own health.

"My health! oh, what does that signify?" says Irene, as the tears well up freshly to her swollen eyelids. "There is nothing left for me to live for now."

She has born up bravely until to-day, for she is no weak creature to render herself sodden by tears that cannot undo the past; she is a woman made for action rather than regret; but the hardest moment in life for self-control is that in which we return to an emptied home, having left all that remains of what we loved beneath the ground. The voice that made our hearts rejoice was silent; the loving eyes beamed on us no longer; the warm, firm hand was cold and clasped; yet, we could see and touch them. God only knows what joy and strength there comes from contact—and how hard faith is without sight. We look on what we love, and though we have had evidence of its estrangement, still delude ourselves with the sweet falsehood that it is as it ever was: we lose sight of it, and though it be strong as death and faithful as the grave, cold doubts will rise betwixt it and ourselves to torture us until we meet again.

It is well the dead are buried out of sight; else would they never be forgotten. Human love cannot live for ever, unless it sees and touches. So Irene feels for the first time that she has really lost her mother.

But Colonel Mordaunt has lived longer on this world than she has, and his "all" still stands before him, more engaging than ever, in her deep mourning and distress.

"You must not say so," he answers, gently. "You must let me take care of you now; it was a promise made to your poor mother."

"Ah! Mother, mother!"

"My dear girl, I feel for you more than I can express, but I entreat you not to give way. Think how distressed she would be to see you neglecting the health she was always so anxious to preserve. I hear that you have made no regular meals for a week past. This must continue no longer; you must permit me to alter it."

"I will permit you to do anything that you think right, Colonel Mordaunt. I have no friend left but yourself."

"Then I shall order dinner to be served for us in your sitting-room, and expect you to do the honors of the table."

"Since you wish it, I will try to do so."

"I do wish it, my dear cousin, for more reasons than one. Mr. Walmsley, your mother's solicitor, will be here to-morrow; and it is quite necessary that I should have a little conversation with you before you meet him."

"When the dinner is ready I shall be there."

And in another hour Colonel Mordaunt and Irene St. John are seated opposite to one another at table. Her eyes are still red, her cheeks pale, and she neither eats nor talks much; but she is quiet and composed, and listens to all her cousin has to say with interest and attention. He does not broach the subject of money, however, until the dinner has been cleared away again, and they are safe from the waiters' supervision.

Then Irene draws her chair nearer to the open stove, for November has set in bright and cold; and Colonel Mordaunt, still playing with his fruit and wine, commences the unwelcome topic.

"I have something to say to you, my dear Irene, less pleasant than important; but money considerations are generally so. Have you any idea of the amount of your mother's income?"

"My mother's income? No the least. But it was a large one, was it not? We always lived so well in London."

"Too well, I am afraid, my dear. Women are sadly ignorant about the management of money."

"Yes; I am sure I am," she replies, indifferently. "In fact, it never entered my head to make any inquiries on the subject. We had a house in Brook Street, you know, and our own carriage, and everything we could desire. I never remember poor mamma refusing me money in my life, or expressing the slightest anxiety on the subject."

"It would have been better if she had done so, my dear. I had a long talk with her about her affairs a week or two before her death; and she was anxious that I should look into and arrange them for her. Your father did

"Why not? Hundreds of women do it."

"Hundreds of women sell themselves, you mean. Well, I am not for sale."

"You call it too harsh a term, Irene. I did not intend that you should marry any one in order to obtain means of support; but that, if an eligible offer should present itself from some man whom you could respect, even if he does not exactly come up to the standard you may have erected in your imagination—"

She interrupts him quickly.

"What standard? What are you talking of?—what do you mean?"

"I was only talking generally, my dear. Young ladies always have an ideal."

"I am not a young lady, then; I have none."

"You have never yet known, perhaps, what it is to be what is called 'in love,'" he continues, searchingly.

She colors, and looks annoyed.

"Colonel Mordaunt, I thought you too old and wise to care to discuss such nonsense. Any way, I do not care to discuss it with you, especially to-day. Let me leave you for the present, and when Mr. Walmsley arrives, you will send and let me know."

She is going then, but he stops her.

"Don't be offended with me, my dear Irene."

"Offended? Oh, no!" returning to place her hands in his. "How could I be, after all your great kindness to me and—to her? I look upon you as a father, indeed I do, and could not feel offended at anything which you might please to say to me."

As she leaves him he sighs.

There is some little delay in the solicitor's appearance, during which time Colonel Mordaunt's attentions to his young cousin are as deferential as they are devoted. Then comes Mr. Walmsley and his bundle of papers, by which his worst fears for Irene's income are realised; for when the various debts are disposed of and the accounts made up, three or four thousand pounds is all the balance left in the banker's hands.

"You cannot live on it; it will be sheer beggary," says Colonel Mordaunt, as he discloses the fact to her.

"It will do very well. Many have less," is the indifferent answer.

"Irene! you do not know what you are talking about. You have always been clothed and fed and tended like a gentlewoman; and the interests of this money will barely suffice to provide you with the necessaries of life. It is madness to imagine that you will be able to live upon it."

"But what am I to do, then?" she says, innocently, as she lays her hand upon his arm, and looks up into his face. "If I have no more, it must be enough. No arguments can double it."

"What are you to do? Oh, Irene! if I might tell you—if I only dared to tell you the means by which, if you so will it, you may be placed at once in the position which befits your birth and station, and far above the paltry necessity of ever again considering how you are to do anything which money can do for you."

"Colonel Mordaunt!" she cries, shrinking from him.

She does not profess to misunderstand his meaning, for it is glowing in his eyes, and trembling in his accents, and lighting up his handsome, middle-aged face, until it looks ten years younger than it did before; and Irene is too true a woman to stoop to flatter her own vanity by playing on his feelings. There are many of her sex who pretend they cannot tell when a man is in love with them. They are either fools or hypocrites. Irene is neither. She sees too plainly, though for the first time, that the affection Colonel Mordaunt bears for her is not at all cousinly, and her natural impulse is to shrink away. He perceives the action, and it goads him on.

"You shrink from me; you think, because I am old enough to be your father, that therefore I am too old to love you. Irene! no boy that you have ever met has it in his power to conceive so deep a passion as that with which you have inspired me. I am aware that I cannot expect an answering feeling on your part—that for you I am only a middle-aged, grey-haired man; but give me the right to cherish you, and I shall have all that I desire. You are alone; let me protect you: friendless; let me take my place by your side: poor; oh, my darling! with what pride and pleasure should I pour out my riches at your feet, if you will but accept them at my hands!"

"Oh, Colonel Mordaunt! you frighten me. I never dreamt of this. Pray, let me go."

"Not till I have told you all. Irene! I know your secret. I know that you have loved, and been disappointed."

She reddens now—reddens like a peony—and more from anger than from shame.

"What right have you to say so? Do you want to insult me?"

"Is it a sin, then, of which I accuse you? My dear child, when you have come to my age, you will have seen so much of this world's wickedness and trouble, that a girl's disappointment will appear a very ordinary affair to you."

"Will it?" she answers, thoughtfully, with her eyes cast on the ground. "And yet I feel as though no sorrow could touch me in this life again."

"But poverty and solitude, and all the minor evils arising from them, will aggravate your trouble, and make you feel it more. Irene, you have acknowledged that I am correct. Now that I know the worst, let me renew the offer I have just made you—let me save you from yourself."

"Oh no! you could not do it, Colonel Mordaunt. I feel your kindness—your generosity—Indeed I do; but I could not marry you, even to escape worse misfortunes than those you have alluded to."

"I am, then, odious to you?" he says, mournfully,

"On the contrary, I have an affection for you. No, do not misunderstand my meaning. I feel most kindly towards you for the sake of what you have done for my dear mother and myself—how could I do otherwise?—too kindly, indeed, to take advantage of the noble offer you have made me."

"Leave me to judge of that, Irene. You would cancel the debt a thousand times over by the present of yourself."

"No, it is impossible. You must not deceive yourself. Oh, Colonel Mordaunt! do not look so grieved about it. For your sake, I will tell you what I never told to any mortal yet; though, from what you say, my dear mother must have guessed the truth. I have loved, deeply, irretrievably, and in vain. This is a grief which would have well-nigh gone to break my heart, had not care for her prevented my indulging in it; and since the necessity for restraint has been withdrawn, I feel it press me down so hardly, that I have no strength left to cope with it—or myself."

As she finishes the confession Irene sinks down into the nearest chair, and covers her burning face with her hands. Colonel Mordaunt kneels beside her.

"My dear girl! have I not already said that this fact is no impediment? I did not expect to claim all your heart, Irene—at least, at first. Be my wife, and I will teach you to forget this sorrow."

"Oh, never! You do not know what you are speaking of. You would come to curse the day on which I took you at your word. Dear cousin," raising her eyes and placing her hands upon his shoulder, "be contented with such affection as I can give you. I love you now; in any other relation I might—hate you."

Colonel Mordaunt rises to his feet testily.

"Then you are determined to waste your youth dreaming of a man who rejected your hand; to let the world (himself included) see that you are wearing the willow for a fellow who is not worthy of your lightest thought; who had no consideration for you or your good name, and insulted your poor mother when she told him so?—a proper lover, indeed, for a woman like yourself to renounce the world for—a pitiful scoundrel, who is probably laughing in his sleeve at the mortification he has caused you."

He has stung her hardly there; and he meant so to sting her. She stands up and confronts him, tearless and majestic.

"I don't know why you should so wound me. I don't know what I have done to deserve it, unless it is the fit reward for my folly in confiding in you. I wish I had bitten out my tongue before I had told you anything; but, if you are a gentleman, do not make me more angry than I am, by alluding to it again."

"Oh, Irene! forgive me; it was the strength of my love that induced me to be cruel. Only give me hope—say that at some future time, when you have somewhat recovered this disappointment, perhaps, you will think of what I have told you, and I will try to be contented."

"It would be madness to give hope where there is none. Besides, such affairs as these, it is indecent to discuss them so soon after my mother's death."

"She would not say so. She died happy in the belief that I should befriend you. Say that, by-and-by—in a few months' time—I may ask you again."

"If you do, my answer can only be the same; I have no heart left to give any one, Colonel Mordaunt."

"Never mind the heart! Give me yourself, Irene, say that I may ask you again, in a month's time."

"A month? oh no! A month can make no difference."

"In three months, then. It is a longer period than you anticipate. Give me my answer three months hence."

"Oh, why will you torture me so! I shall never change my mind!"

"Child, I know better! I know that at least there is a chance; and I cannot afford to throw the smallest chance away. I will speak to you again in three months."

"No—not in three; in six. If I must repeat what I have said to-day, I will repeat it after six months' deliberation. Then you will know that I am in earnest."

"You shall be in earnest before the time arrives. Irene! I am another man; you have given me hope!"

"A very slight one."

"It is enough to cling to. Ah, my darling! you must not think, because I am older than yourself, that I shall worry or fidget you. I am younger in heart than in years, Irene; and love for you has made me feel a boy again. Only be mine, and I will devote my life to making yours happy. And now let us talk of yourself. You have refused to come to Fen Court: what do you intend to do?"

There had been a proposal, after Mrs. St. John's death, that Irene should go and stay at Colonel Mordaunt's house, Fen Court, which is presided over by his sister, Miss Isabella Mordaunt; and the girl, before she guessed at the nature of her cousin's affection for her, had half agreed to do so; but now she shrinks from the idea as a lamb might shrink from going to picnic in a lion's den; and it has become necessary to think of some other residence for her.

"I shall accept the offer of my aunt, Mrs. Cavendish, to go and stay a few weeks at Norwood. Perhaps I may make some arrangement about living with her. I have thought of nothing yet."

"But why choose Mrs. Cavendish, with her heap of children, in that dull suburban house? It is so unlike what you have been accustomed to; you will be bored out of your life. I should have thought your other aunt, Mrs. Campbell, with that nice little place in Clarges Street, would have been a far more suitable chaperon for you."

"Chaperon! what do I want with a chaperon? Do you suppose I am going to run about to theatres and parties before I have changed my first mourning? Besides, I hate London. I shall not mind the dullness of Norwood; it will be in accordance with my feelings."

"Ah, my dear; you're very young. Ten more years in this world will teach you to try all you can to disperse a grief, instead of sitting down to nurse it. But I suppose you must have your own way—at least, for six months," with a sly glance that has no power to make Irene smile. "When will you start?"

"As soon as possible. I want to get out of this miserable city as quickly as I can. Can we go to-morrow?"

"Well—with a little energy, I dare say we can. But you are not fit for much exertion. I must pack your things for you."

"Oh no! I could not let you do so. Besides, you have your own."

"I shall do my own, and yours too. If you persist in refusing, the only thing is—we can't go."

"But I thought you had a particular engagement this afternoon with your old friend Comte de Marigny?"

"My old friend must give way to my young friend."

"How good you are to me. I do not deserve it."

"You deserve it all, and far more, if I could give it. But it is not all disinterestedness, you know, Irene. I want a heavy price for my devotion."

She colors, sighs, and turns away. I another couple of days she is installed as temporary inmate of her aunt's house at Norwood.

How am I to describe Fen Court, in Leicestershire? And yet I must try to bring the place, which will be the scene of so many of the events in this history, clearly before the mind's eye of my reader. The house itself, which stands in the village of Priestly, about ten miles from one of the principal county towns, is neither old nor modern; but may have been built in the early part of the present century. It is a substantial white manor, not picturesque or romantic looking, but eminently comfortable—at least, from the outside. It has a bold porch, and large windows, some of which open to the ground: a conservatory on one side, leading to a billiard-room, and a library upon the other. It is fronted by a thick shrubbery, a noble grass-plot, above which droop cedar trees, and a broad drive, kept hard as iron. To the left are the stables and the kennel, planted out by shrubs, but close at hand; the right leads, by a dark, winding path, to the back of the house, where a fine lawn, surrounded by flower-beds, slopes down towards a lake with an artificial island on it, which is reached by a rustic bridge; beyond which lie the farm buildings, and their ungainly outbuildings.

So far, Fen Court appears to be all that could be desired; and had been purchased eagerly by Colonel Mordaunt on his coming into his money, resigning the service and settling at home. But the inside of the Court has one great fault—it is, notwithstanding the sum which have been spent on its equipment, irremediably ugly and dull. The house contains every comfort, having a long, well-stocked library, a vast dining-room, cheerful breakfast-parlor, and marvellously-furnished drawing-room. When I say marvellously, I do not mean in marvellous good taste. Colonel Mordaunt has never indulged in personal hobbies (except in the stables and hunting-field). There are pictures on the walls of Fen Court, but he seldom looks at them, and hardly knows their painters' names. He ridicules the idea of any one caring for old china and glass; has never heard of bric-a-brac; and calls a love for worm-eaten oak or ebony sheer folly. Give him a well-built house, free from draughts and smoky chimneys; let Druce or Maple furnish it according to his own taste, and the best of his ability, and he could wish for nothing more.

And up to a certain point Colonel Mordaunt is right. Home comforts—good beds and lots of blankets, spotless table-linen, and very hot plates—are worth all the Venetian glass and marqueterie in the world, if we cannot combine the two. But he never tries, and never has tried to combine them; and his sister Isabella takes no more trouble than he does. The stables of Fen Court are perfect in all their fittings and arrangements; so are the kennels; so are the sleeping, and eating, and sitting apartments of the human part of the establishment; only men and women (some men and women, that is to say) occasionally feel the want of more than bodily comfort.

Yet no one in Fen Court seems to miss sweet sounds, and all the pretty graceful nothings that throw a nameless charm on the apartments presided over by a woman of taste.

Miss Mordaunt is decidedly not a woman of taste. She is only a poor weak-spirited dependent on her brother's will and pleasure, and the tyranny of Mrs. Quekett, the housekeeper. Mrs. Quekett is an awful woman; it is she that clothes those unhappy chairs and sofas in the

drawing-room in brown-holland covers, so that no one has ever seen their blue satin glories exposed to daylight, and drapes the chandeliers in gauzy petticoats, like gold-beaters' skin, and pins yellow moss in round the picture-frames, until the room looks like the back parlor of a public-house, or the state apartment set aside for the reception of new customers in a young ladies' school.

It's Rebecca Quekett who decides how much butter shall be consumed per week at the Court breakfast table, and how much cream in the coffee after dinner; which servants shall be retained, and which discharged; which bedrooms shall be used, and which left tenantless; and it is to Rebecca Quekett, and not to Miss Mordaunt, that every one refers for everything that may be required for the household, from a clean duster up to a new Brussels carpet.

Colonel Mordaunt even, paramount amongst his dogs and horses and hunting friends, is nothing inside Fen Court; and his sister is less than nothing—she is but an instrument in the hands of the most despotic of mistresses. For what tyranny can exceed the tyranny of an over-fed and indulged menial; of the inferior who, for some reason best known to ourselves, we have permitted to climb above us; of the servant who, being master of our family secrets, we seem in greater than bodily fear, lest he or she should take advantage of the situation, by wielding illegal influence above our unhappy heads with a satisfaction that knows no remorse?

But let Mrs. Quekett speak for herself.

It is January. Colonel Mordaunt has been home from his continental trip for more than two months, and the hunting-season still engrosses most of his time and thought—it least, to all appearances.

Ten o'clock in the morning; the breakfast, at which several gentlemen in pink have dropped in accidentally, is over; and the master of the hounds, surrounded by his pack of friends and dogs and retainers, has ridden away down the broad gravelled drive, out into the open country, and Miss Mordaunt has Fen Court to herself.

She is a woman of about five-and-forty; not ill-favored, but with a contracted and attenuated figure, and a constant look of deprecatory fear upon her countenance, which go far to make her so. Indeed, she is worse than ill-favored, for she is uninteresting. Some of the plainest women in the world have been the most fascinating. Miss Mordaunt fascinates no one, except with a desire to know why she should pass through life with an expression as though she were silently entreating every one she meets not to kick her. The world has not dealt harder with her than with most, but whenever she has been smitten on the right cheek, she has so pertinaciously turned the left, that her fellow-creatures have smitten her again, out of sheer vice. Every body knows what it is to wish to kick a dog who puts his tail between his legs before he has been spoken to. Humility is Christian; but, in a world of business, it doesn't pay."

Miss Mordaunt being left alone, looks anxiously about the room, locks up the tea and sugar as though she were committing a theft, pulls the bell—with the faintest of tinkles at first, but afterwards, finding it is not answered, somewhat more boldly—and as the servant enters, says, apologetically—

"I think, James—as your master is gone, and the breakfast is over—I think perhaps you had better clear away."

"Very well, miss," replies James, with stolid indifference, as he puts the chairs back against the wall, and proceeds to business.

Miss Mordaunt glances about her, once or twice, uncertainly, and then, with a nervous grin at James, who takes no notice of the proceeding, glides from the room.

In another second she is back again.

"Is Quekett—do you know, James—in the kitchen, or the housekeeper's room?"

"I believe, Mrs. Quekett is not downstairs at all yet, miss."

"Oh, very well! it is no matter, James: it does not in the least signify. Thank you, James!" and Miss Mordaunt vanishes.

She does not pass into the garden or enter her own apartment: she goes straight upstairs and looks at the door of one of the best bedrooms.

"Come in!" says a voice that has been so used to lay down the law that it cannot speak except authoritatively; but as Miss Mordaunt appears, it attempts to modify its tone. "Oh! is it you, miss? Pray come in. Past ten o'clock! Well, I'm sure I had no idea it was so late."

Mrs. Quekett, clothed in a stuff dressing-gown and laced night-cap, is seated by the fire: her breakfast-tray is by her

FOR HIS SAKE.

BY A LADY.

Hold closer still my hand, dear love,
Nor fear its touch will soil thine own;
No palm is cleaner now than this,
So free from earth-stain has it grown
Since last you held it clasped so close,
And with it held my life and heart,
For my heart beat but in your smile,
And life was death, we two apart.

I loved you so. And you? Ah, well!
I have no word or thought of blame;
And even now my voice grows low
And tender whispering your name.
You gauged my love by yours; that's all.
I do not think you understood;
There is a point you men can't reach,
Up the white heights of womanhood.

You love us,—so at least you say,
With many tender smile and word;
You kiss us close on mouth and brow,
Till all our heart within is stirred;
And having, unlike you, you see,
No other interests at stake,
We give our best, and count that Death
Is bless'd when suffered for your sake.

MY SISTER'S HUSBAND.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MURDER.

On reading the newspapers, I have often said to myself, "If that were written in a novel no one would believe it. I have read cases of murder that, if made the groundwork of a plot, would be scoffed at by all critics, and abused as too far-fetched by the press. This murder I, alas! saw with my own eyes, and this marriage of my sister's, romantic as it may seem, occasioned us years of misery. Both are true."

My father, Richard Thorne, was a banker, living in the old-fashioned town of Crediton. The bank itself was a large red-brick building standing in the midst of the High Street, and my father, devoted to business, lived on the premises himself, with two servants.

It was a pleasant, old-fashioned house; the Thornes had kept the bank there for many generations. The ground floor contained three large rooms; two of them were devoted to business, the third, a large parlor opening into a quaint, old-fashioned garden, was the living room of the family.

A large iron safe stood here; it was draped with red velvet, so that no one, on first entering the room, could form any idea as to what it was. In the strong room there were three other large safes, filled with parchment deeds. The safe in the parlor my father kept for money—gold and bank-notes.

Upstairs we had a large and very handsome drawing-room, a good library, and plenty of lofty, airy bed-rooms.

My father had been married twice; his first wife died at the end of two years, leaving one daughter, Alice. But Alice, I must explain, was not my father's daughter. His first wife was a widow, with this one child, who was three years old when her mother again changed her state for that of a wedded wife. Alice Forster was, therefore, strictly speaking, no relative of mine, yet I could not have loved a sister of my own more dearly than I did this girl, who always bore that name. My father loved her, too, just as though she had been his own child.

When Alice's mother died she left her fortune to Alice; it amounted, I think, to four hundred a year. She also left, in writing, her wish that Alice should be educated abroad, so she was sent to Brussels, and soon afterwards my father married again.

He was very happy for some years. When I was five my mother died, and I became the darling of his old age—for he was old; he must have been almost fifty when he married my mother. When I remember him first, his head was white as snow.

He was a kind-hearted man, very much wrapped up in his business, in fact, he was never happy away from it. Even at night, when he and I sat alone, his ledgers were his invariable companions.

I must just sketch our daily life in order that you may understand better the tragedy that filled all Crediton with horror. Alice was at this time about seventeen years of age. She was at school at Brussels; I was only ten, and went to a very select "Ladies' Academy," in Crediton.

In the bank my father employed two clerks, who came at nine in the morning and left at six at night. In the house we had two servants, John Hamson, who served as butler, footman, and general factotum, and Harriet Hurst, who was housemaid, cook, and all in one.

The bank was securely guarded: in the front there were iron shutters and iron bars to the doors; in the strong room, where all valuable deeds were kept, there was a large revolver ready loaded; there was also fixed on the roof a large alarm-bell, and in each bed-room there

was a rattle such as was used in Crediton to summon the police. The back of the house was quite as secure; the high wall surrounding the garden was crowned with huge iron spikes; above all there was our good dog Caesar; neither beggar or tramp ever dared to come near him.

And yet, although these precautions were taken, they were deemed unnecessary. We never had any robberies in Crediton—such a thing as a burglary was unknown. The bank had never been robbed—our neighbors were all honest, poor and rich alike.

One day—I remember the date but too well—Harriet was observed to be in very high spirits. She told me in the morning that her sister was to be married that day, and she was going to ask my father's permission for John Hamson and herself to attend a party in the evening. It was the twenty-third of June; I was taking breakfast with my father when she came to ask the desired permission. It was granted at once.

"You must both be back by twelve," said my father, "you must not be one minute later."

She promised faithfully, and she kept her word; but it was too late.

I remember my pride at getting my father's tea ready all by myself. As we sat drinking it he said,

"I had a very ugly customer in the bank today, Jennie—I cannot get his face out of my mind."

"Was it so very ugly?" I asked.

"Not in that sense; some people, I suppose, would call him very handsome. But it was a bad face—a bad face, Jennie, with evil, handsome eyes, and a cruel mouth. I wonder why he haunts me so?"

"What did he come for, papa?" I inquired.

"Only to change some money. He had such a peculiar manner, looking round him as though he were taking notes of the place."

At six o'clock both clerks, as usual, went round with my father, and the business part of the house was made fast and secure.

"We will go round to the back," said my father, "as both the servants are out."

They fastened the outer gate, made so safe with thick iron bar. As we all passed by the kennel, my father called "Caesar!" and the good old dog came out, but he was cross, and not inclined to play; he gave a short howl, and went in again. The clerks both laughed. "His majesty is not in a very good temper to-night," said one of them; the other, George Wyton, asked if he should stay with my father, as the servants were out.

My poor father! I remember his laughing answer.

"No thank you, Wyton, Jennie and I will keep house all right. I am not nervous—there are no rogues about, thank God."

"No rogues could get in here," said Wyton. "I always say Crediton Bank is safe as a fortress."

Yet now that I remember, they did not like to leave us alone. I am sure they loitered and lingered admiring the flowers, until it was nearly eight before they went away.

Harriet had left the supper ready laid for us—there was a cold fowl, salad, and ham.

"I am very hungry," my father said. "Come along, Jennie, we will have some supper."

My poor father—God bless him!—he ate so heartily of the fowl and salad; then as usual, I begged the bones for Caesar. It was my task and my pleasure to take him his supper every night.

Ah me, if I had not been such a child! If I had been older or wiser! Poor Caesar lay stretched out dead—but I thought he was sleeping; how could I suspect he was dead? I tried to wake him, and laid the bones by his side. "Caesar, Caesar, good dog!" I called, but Caesar neither moved or stirred.

I told my father the dog was fast asleep; if he had but gone out to see, all would have been different.

I was ten years old, and perhaps ought to be ashamed to confess that my greatest earthly treasure was a most beloved wax doll. I had to undress it and get it to sleep.

When my father had finished his supper he read his newspaper through.

Then he said, "I must go to work now, Jennie." We went into the parlor together, and he lighted both the gases. Oh, my God! if I could but have foreseen!

"It is very warm to-night," my father said.

"I shall open the window, Jennie."

The window was actually a long glass door that opened into a small green lawn leading to the garden. There were long iron shutters to the window, so that when fastened it was safe as could be desired. Alas! that the summer heat induced my poor father to open it.

It was after nine then, and looking out, I saw that the evening shadows were gathering fast. It was not a bright night; the heat had left a mist behind which seemed settling over the world.

I saw my father sit down to the table; he had pen and ink before him, a large ledger, and a cash-box. I saw him empty a great heap of gold and bank-notes on the table, and begin to count busily.

I must explain that he was sitting with his back to the window. Had he chosen any other position the tragedy might have been averted. The last words I remember his saying were—

"Do not make a noise, Jennie, I am counting."

So I went down to the other end of the room and undressed my doll. I sang some little lullabies very softly to her. Perhaps I was sleepy then, for I do not seem to remember anything

until I started, opened my eyes very wide, and looked across the room to where my father sat.

"Oh, my God! my God! that the sight did not kill me! He, my father, sat still, busily counting—his hands sorting little heaps of gold, his pen between his lips—and behind him stood a man with a crape mask over his face, and a hammer in his hand. I sprang up; I tried to scream, but my lips seemed dumb, my whole body was paralysed. My father looked up quickly, and that moment—oh, if I could but forget it!—that moment the hammer came down with a heavy thud on his white head. I saw the agonised expression that came over his face as he tried to stretch out his hands to me; then the cruel blow was repeated a second, a third time; a torrent of crimson blood poured over the table, the books, the chair, and the floor. I heard him give one heavy sigh, then he fell back, and I knew he was dead.

The murderer took the gold watch and chain from his pocket; he took up the gold that lay on the table by handfuls and thrust it into a black bag he had with him; he caught up a large roll of bank-notes and placed them along with the gold.

He looked in my father's face to see if he were dead, and then took up the keys of the strong room and the safe. Up to this time he had not seen me. I was far from him, in the dim, shadowy corner of the large room; but now, as he hastily caught up the keys and made for the door, his eyes fell on me with a glance of startled horror. I heard him mutter an oath between his teeth; then the numb horror that had paralysed me, gave way.

"You have killed my father!" I cried. "Oh, my father! my poor father!"

"You must follow him, my dear," he hissed, in a mocking tone. I felt a terrible blow on my head—I can even remember falling while the blood was running—and then came a dead, long blank.

CHAPTER II.

RECOVERY.

When anything like sense returned to me, I opened my eyes. There I was lying in my own little room, in my own white bed. Had it been a dreadful dream? I tried to call out, but my voice was gone, no sound left my lips; my head, too, felt very strange; my hair was all gone, and I could feel bandages and strappings. Was it a dream? Oh, the horror of it! The cruel blows on that old white head; oh, father, father! I moaned aloud. Then I saw Harriet sitting by my bedside. I noticed that all the red, rosy color was gone from her face. She bent down over me.

"My darling," she said. "Miss Jennie!"

I tried to answer her, but I could not. I held out one little trembling hand, she kissed it and covered it with tears.

Another voice said. "Do not agitate her, poor child."

I looked; it was Doctor Hunt. He came to me then, and spoke in a cheerful voice.

"You are better, Jennie. You have been very ill. Try to drink this, and go to sleep."

I drank it, and turned my head away; they thought I was asleep, but I heard every word.

"If she recovers, it will be almost a miracle," said the doctor. "Imagine a child of her age witnessing such a fearful sight!"

"Let us hope in mercy she was struck first," said Harriet.

Then I raised my hand again, and beckoned the doctor to come near me.

"Will you tell me," I whispered, "whether it was all true, or is it a dream?"

"It was true, my dear little girl," said the doctor, "but now you must try to forget it."

He laid his hand on my forehead, and then I went to sleep.

Some days afterwards I was able to sit up and tell my story.

The magistrates came to hear it, and those strong men sobbed like little children when I told them how my poor father had been killed before my very eyes, and that in dying he had stretched out his hand to me.

"Did you see the murderer's face?" asked one.

"No," I replied; "it was covered with black crape. I only saw his eyes shining through."

"Then if ever you meet him again, you would not know him?"

"It would be impossible," I said.

"Did you hear him speak?" asked another.

"No; he only hissed into my ear that I should follow my father."

Tears rose in the magistrate's eyes. "Poor child!" he said, "what a terrible ordeal."

A few days later, and Harriet told me what had happened. John and she had returned a few minutes before twelve; they rang several times at the front door but could not gain admittance, neither did they see any lights in the house. They grew anxious, and went round to the back; it was all darkness there. They hammered at the gate, but it was all in vain.

"It is a strange thing that Caesar does not bark," said John. "I do not like this."

He went and fetched the policeman. They procured a ladder and climbed over the wall. The first thing they saw was Caesar lying dead.

"There has been foul play," said the policeman; "that dog has been poisoned."

Then they went forward—Harriet sick at heart with an unknown fear. They saw the open window, but the room was all in darkness, for the murderer had taken the precaution of extinguishing all the lights.

The policeman entered first, and started back with a cry of horror.

"It is murder!" he shouted, and John caught up the cry.

"Murder! murder!" rang through the sweet night air, up to the clear sky. Murder! and in a short time a crowd of people had gathered to find what that horrible cry meant.

No weak words of mine can tell the horror that seized them all when they found the old white-haired man lying dead in a pool of blood, his head completely beaten in. The murderer, after giving the blow he thought would kill me, had flung me down by my father's side.

"Robbery and murder!" said John, pointing to the empty cash-box.

They found the safes rifled; the deeds were untouched, but all the money, amounting to several thousand pounds, was gone. On everything, on the handles of the doors, on the keys, on the papers, they found the trace of bloody fingers that had left a crimson mark, and in the middle of the floor there lay a white cambric handkerchief, on which the murderer had wiped his hands, but there was no mark—no initials on it.

The great alarm-bell was rung; people came crowding in. The doctors were summoned in hot haste; my father had been dead two hours, at least, they said. People were surprised to find that I still lived.

I had a terrible wound on my head. I cannot, even to this day, understand why I escaped with my life. For some time the doctors were afraid that, even if I lived, my reason would be lost. People were impatient for me to recover, thinking I should be able to tell them all about it, but my evidence was of little use, I knew how it was done, but I could not tell who had done it.

Of course there was a coroner's inquest, and a verdict of wilful murder against some person unknown. Then Government offered a large reward for the apprehension of the murderer. We had detectives from Scotland Yard, but there was not the least clue. The opinion of the detectives was, that the murderer had secreted himself somewhere in the garden during the afternoon. Harriet was not always careful in shutting the garden gate when she went on her errands. It was just possible that she had left it open for a few minutes and that he had found his way in. That was the most possible explanation offered. There were no marks on the doors or windows of a forcible entry; had there been the least noise my father must have heard it, and perhaps his life might have been saved. If the man was concealed in the garden, he had nothing to do but walk in through the open window.

In vain—in vain all search, all suggestion. Some few strangers passed every day through Crediton; no one seemed to remember anyone in particular.

Not until years afterwards did it strike me that my poor father had spoken of a stranger whose appearance he did not like. Perhaps, had I remembered, inquiries might have been set on foot, and he might have been found.

My poor father was buried; all Crediton came to his funeral. I do not think there was one dry eye in all that vast crowd. When his will was read, it was discovered that he had left two thousand pounds to Alice, and ten thousand to me; so, in my little way, I was quite an heiress.

I have often wondered since why no one sent for Alice—it did not seem to occur to anyone. I went to live with a cousin of my mother's, Miss Brynmor, who promised to take charge of me.

In a year's time the shock of the event (it was the first murder in Crediton) had abated; the bank had passed into other hands; the terrible stains had been erased from the floor and the walls; the detectives, after apprehending two innocent men, had given up the whole matter as beyond them, and I was safe under the shelter of Miss Brynmor's roof.

Harriet came to live with me. Indeed,

after my marriage, you are to live with me and never be parted from me any more.

" You will ask, ' who am I going to marry ? ' Oh Jennie, he is the kindest, the handsomest, and noblest man in all the world. You will be sure to love him. You cannot help it.

" His name is Horton Varnley, he is an Englishman, his home is in London. He does something on that mysterious place they call ' The Change ; ' he has plenty of money, and we are to live in good style.

" There is only one thing, Jennie ; you know I am morbidly sensitive over that cruel Crediton tragedy. I never can bear either to think or to speak of it.

" Horton knows nothing of it, and perhaps never may do. Of course, if he should hear it, he will only be sorry for us, but I hope he never may ; I try to forget it, so do not mention it.

" Make haste and come, Jennie, I am counting the hours until I shall see you again. From your ever loving sister—ALICE."

I was just sixteen when that letter came, and very childish I know for my age ; I looked more like a child than a young girl ; for do all I would, I could not get over that terrible shock.

Miss Brynmor was very pleased ; she thought travel, change of scene, a wedding, and a happy home with Alice must cure me in time.

CHAPTER III.

That journey to Brussels is the most pleasant memory in my life. My sister was at the station to meet me, and we drove through the beautiful suburbs until we reached Madame Boilleau's house.

" Prepare for a surprise, Jennie," said my sister as she ran laughingly up the steps. Madame Boilleau and Reine met me with the warmest welcome. My sister hurried me upstairs ; she took off my bonnet and arranged my dress with her own hands.

" I want you to look very nice," she said. " Now come to the saloon with me."

I followed her. As she opened the door, she turned to me with a smile.

" Prepare to be enchanted, Jennie," and then at the other end of the long room I saw a tall dark man.

" Horton," said my sister, " here is little Jennie."

He came up to greet me, and I saw a look of unutterable surprise, mingled with fear, cross his face.

" Who is this ? " he asked sharply, and I saw his under lip quiver.

" My sister, Jennie," said Alice ; " or to introduce her in proper form, Miss Jennie Thorne—Mr. Horton Varnley."

" Thorne ! " he cried, " and your sister ! Why, Alice, how is that ? "

" My father married twice, or, rather, my mother did," she replied. " I suppose, in strict truth, Jennie and I are not related at all ; but we are sisters in heart."

He still seemed amazed. " Thorne, Thorne," he said ; " surely I have heard that name before, or I know something connected with it."

My sister's face clouded over. " You are right," she said, " there is a tragedy. I have never named it to you, Horton, because I cannot bear to remember it. Perhaps you may have read of it."

" What was it ? " he asked, and the sharpness of his voice caused Alice to look up in wonder.

He had shaken hands with me, and stood now with his fingers resting on the table. I wondered why they trembled so.

" I never meant to tell you," said Alice, " but the truth is, Horton, Jennie's father—my dear foster-father—was cruelly murdered."

" Murdered ! " he repeated faintly, " how—where was it ? "

" At Crediton," she replied. " He was a banker ; he was robbed and murdered ; it is years since, now—we never speak of it. I had better tell you, perhaps, that the whole of the horrid scene passed before poor Jennie, and she has never quite recovered from the effects of it."

" I think," he said slowly, " that I remember something of it — I must have read it. Poor child," he added, turning to me, " how very dreadful for you ; it was a great wonder that you were not killed too."

" I was very near it," I replied ; and then we all three sat silent, looking at each other."

" Jennie is a shy little creature," said Alice ; " you must not let her be afraid of you, Horton."

Then he came up to me and laid his hand on my head.

" We shall be very good friends," he said. " I like Jennie already, and I hope she likes me."

No ; I did not. I looked up into his face, and a certain kind of repulsion rose in me. It was a handsome face, certainly — large dark eyes, dark rings of curling hair, but the mouth was cold and cruel, the lips thin and hard. Ah, no ! I did not like him ; when he touched my head, a shudder of repugnance ran through me.

" I did not tell you Horton was here, Jennie, because I wanted to surprise you," said my sister, as soon as we reached her room again ; " now tell me, do you like him ? "

She looked so eager, so happy, so bright, I could not disappoint her. I could not say no.

I murmured some few words of praise ; Alice was too happy herself to notice how formal they were.

The wedding was to take place in four days. Mr. Varnley was staying at some hotel in Brussels. Madame Boilleau, who was very fond of my sister, insisted upon giving a grand *déjeuner*,

They had decided upon going to Germany for the honeymoon ; I was to remain for two or three months with Madame Boilleau, then join Alice in her new home, never to leave her again.

My brother-in-law who was to be was very kind and gracious to me during these few days. He seemed to like talking to me. One thing distressed me ; whenever he could get me alone, he talked to me about the murder.

The subject seemed to have a morbid attraction for him ; he made me describe the scene to him over and over again—he asked me a hundred questions concerning the murderer — his voice, his face, his clothes.

" And you think, Jennie," he said to me one day, " that you shall never be able to identify him, not even if you were to meet him again ? "

" I shall know him in one place," I said thoughtfully.

" Where will that be ? " he asked.

" Before the judgment-seat," I replied. " I know that I shall meet him, shall recognize and accuse him there."

He looked quite startled and frightened for half a minute.

" What a romantic little lady ! " he said, with a sneer. " You talk poetry, Jennie."

" I talk reason, Mr. Varnley," I replied, with great dignity. " Do you not know that all such crimes are punished in another world, even if they escape in this ? "

After that he said less to me, and I was very glad of it. He commanded Alice's prudence, and said that she acted very wisely in not letting such a story be made more public than it was possible to help.

" We are to be brother and sister, Jennie," he said to me one day ; " I hope you will learn to trust me."

He was going to be Alice's husband, and Alice loved him so very dearly, why should not I try to trust him and be fond of him ?

" What is the amount of money your father left you ? " he asked.

" Ten thousand pounds," I replied.

" Do you know how it is invested, Jennie ? "

" Mr. Dent was my father's lawyer, he is mine too ; I suppose he is executor to my father's will. It is he who pays me my money."

He said no more then, but often at different times he returned to the same subject. Once he asked me :

" Jennie, you are a rich little woman ; who should you leave all your money to if you died ? "

" To Alice, of course," and a strange peculiar smile crossed his lips as I spoke.

Then came the wedding ; it was very pretty, and very pleasant. My sister made a most lovely bride, and Horton Varnley looked very proud of her.

I should have been happy too, only that I could not quite forget my prejudice against my brother-in-law.

I have all Alice's letters by me still, and I can trace in them her gradual awakening to the truth.

At first they were one long rapture of happiness ; there was no one like Horton, there was no one so utterly happy as herself.

Then quite quietly he seemed to drop out of her letters, there was no mention made of him ; they had only been married six weeks, and it looked very strange. She did not complain, there was not one murmur in any of her letters, but the happiness seemed to be gone from them. I could not help noticing it. Then in a little time all her attention seemed to turn to me.

" I am longing so to see you, Jennie ; every day seems a week. When shall we be settled in London, I wonder, that my darling may come to me ? "

Strange for a young wife ; one would have thought her husband would have engrossed all her time and attention, but such was not the case.

I asked Madame Boilleau one day where my sister had first met Mr. Varnley ; she told me it was at a concert at Brussels, and that he had admired her so much he had asked for an introduction and then never rested until he had won her heart.

" Do you think, madame," I asked, " that he loves her so very much ? "

" Yes." Madame was convinced.

" And you yourself, madame ; do you like him ? " I urged.

" Well, he was handsome, perfectly *comme faut*, and he had money. Yes, madame liked him very much indeed. Why not ? "

" He has such a cruel mouth," I replied ; " a mouth that looks as though he could say and do cruel, mean things."

Madame laughed, and said the " English meeses" were above her comprehension.

It was not very long after this that I received my sister's welcome letter urging me to come to her at once, as they were settled in a charming little villa in St. John's Wood.

" Now," said Madame Boilleau with a smile, " I shall expect soon to hear better news of Mr. Varnley, and that his fastidious little sister is better satisfied with the shape of his lips."

I reached St. John's Wood one summer's night ; it was after nine o'clock. I was charmed by the exterior of the villa, embowered as it was in trees and flowers.

The first moment I saw her I knew my sister was not happy ; the light had died from her eyes, the sweet smile and sunny laughter from her lips. She was pale, and thin, and worn. When she clasped me in her arms she laid her head down on my shoulder like a tired child.

" Oh, my darling," she said, " thank God you are come ! "

She was very kind to me. She made me take some tea, then shewed me the two pretty rooms selected for my use.

During all this time she never once mentioned her husband, nor did I. Ten and eleven struck, yet he did not come home.

" You are tired, Jennie," said Alice. " You had better go to bed, love, now."

" Where is Mr. Varnley ? " I asked.

Her face flushed crimson.

" He seldom comes home before midnight," she replied.

" Why, what does he do out of doors ? " I asked, with all a child's ignorance of life.

" He likes cards and billiards," she replied briefly, and I said no more.

I saw she was unhappy, and I went to bed with an aching heart.

It was after midnight, nay, morning had dawned when he came home. I heard him speaking in a gruff, hoarse voice to Alice.

" Hush ! " she said. " Jennie is here. Jennie will hear you."

" Let her hear me," he said. " If Jennie has formed any romantic ideas about my character, the sooner she is undeceived the better."

" God forgive me ! I hated him in my heart, as I heard his gruff voice, from which all trace of polish or refinement had died away.

CHAPTER IV.

I have seen much of the world since then, but I declare that I have never in all my life known anyone so unhappy as my sister Alice. Her husband was most brutal to her. I never remember hearing him address one civil word to her. He ordered her about as though she had been a dog, he snarled and swore, he was savage, rough, and violent. Alice was terrified to death at him ; she would tremble at the sound of his voice, at his footsteps. She was like a children child to this her most brutal taskmaster.

One thing struck me so much, she never had any money. I could not understand it. At first she tried to hide this state of things from me—then she gave up all attempts.

" He never even gives me a shilling, Jennie," she said. " I trusted in him so implicitly that when we were married I refused to allow any portion of my money to be settled on myself. It was placed unreservedly in his hands."

" You shall have all mine, dear," I said.

She shook her head sadly.

" Jennie," she continued, in helpless, hopeless tone of voice, " I may just as well tell you the truth, darling ! you are sure to find it out. I am the most miserable woman under the heavens ! I have married an impostor — my husband is not even a gentleman. He had not one shilling of his own when he married me, he only did it for my money, and he is gambling it all away as fast as he can. He beat me, Jennie, when we had been married ten days ; beat me, and left great black bruises on my arms."

" You shall go away," I cried ; " you shall not stay here."

" Where can I go ? " she said faintly. " I have no money—see, Jennie, if it were to save my life I could not find one pound."

" You forget, darling," I cried, " that all I have is yours."

" I must abide my fate," she said. " I shall not go away unless I see my life or yours is in danger."

Strange, how these words haunted me ; how could our lives be in danger ? he would never try to hurt us. We were very unhappy. During breakfast and the earlier part of the day Mr. Varnley remained at home. I used to think sometimes my sister's heart would break, and I in my childish way nourished a furious hatred against him.

He always went out to dinner and stayed until after midnight ; those long hours were devoted to gambling ; no wonder my sister's money melted rapidly.

Suddenly—I shall never forget our surprise—he quite changed. He became most friendly and cordial ; he called Alice " darling," and the white worn face brightened up wonderfully. He took us to the theatre, to the gardens, and was so bright, so pleasant, we hardly knew him.

This wonderful change lasted two whole weeks. One afternoon, as we were having tea, he said :

" Alice, you should have your life insured."

She looked up at him, startled, I could see.

" You, too, Jennie ; and I shall do the same myself."

I am almost ashamed to confess my great ignorance, but in very truth I did not know what it meant. Alice seemed perfectly indifferent, she was willing if he wished it.

Then we had doctors to examine us. We went to different offices ; at last Alice was insured at the " National" for five thousand, and myself for two.

Then came a lull. Mr. Varnley lost some of his politeness, but did not relapse into his old brutality.

One night he had been unusually kind to me, and had insisted on my having some hot wine and water ; the wine, I thought, had a strange taste, but to please him, I drank it ; then went to my room. I thought it was the heat of the room that made me so very sick and faint. I could not have felt more sick had I been on the sea ; my lips burned ; I felt parched and hot, with the strangest sensation of deathly faintness. I would not give way to it.

It must have been nearly three in the morning when I heard my door opened very gently. and Alice, looking ghastly in the faint light, came in.

She came up to my bedside ; the white, wild horror of her face frightened me.

" Jennie," she asked, " are you ill ? "

" I do not feel very well," I said. " What is the matter, Ally ? "

" Hush ! " she replied, " there is much the matter. I see it all now, Jennie, my darling ; he has only insured our lives in order to destroy us and take possession of the money."

I looked at her in horror. " To kill us, Alice ? "

" Yes, if we stay here. I saw him to-night, Jennie, slip a small white powder into the glass of wine he mixed for me. I pretended to drink it, but threw part of it into a vase. He means to poison one or both of us very slowly—I am sure of it, Jennie. I swear it ! "

" What are we to do ? " I asked, in helpless terror.

" We must go away at once," she said, " before morning—there is not a moment to be lost. In my husband's dressing-room there stands a small iron safe. I have never opened it, but I know he keeps all his money there. Will you go gently

ROTATION.

Barry, one day, fell very deep in love;
He vowed that nothing could his passion
quench;
True as the everlasting heavens above
His ardor burned for this his only wench.

Barry, too soon, had all that love forgot;
Another flame was lighting up his sky,
For her he wore a blue forget-me-not,
And swore his love would never, never die.

And so the world goes round and round and round,
The same old world, greeting new days by turn;
Barry's fond heart some new true love hath found,
The same old fire doth on new altars burn.

Does the world change amidst such swift revolving?
Does Barry change when idols fade and fall?
The world and Barry are this problem solving—
How things can rotate and not change at all.

OAKLEIGH HALL.

CHAPTER I.

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky.
The flying cloud, the frosty light,
The Year is dying in the night.
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die."

TENNYSON.

So slowly and solemnly rang the last chime of the dying year. Across the "wild sky" the clouds were hurrying as though bidden to be present at some distant post to see the old year die. The wind was full of wild, eerie music, rising, falling, sobbing, dying away; one could have fancied all the spirits of the air were abroad. It would have been no surprise, listening to that wild music, to have raised one's eyes and have seen white shapes floating by, wringing their hands as they were hurried to their doom. The Christmas snow was all frozen, the moon shining on it, glittering cold and pure, and above all came the chime of the new year bells.

Not that the old year was quite dead, but it lay dying. The moments as they passed were like so many throbs in the great pulse of time. The air seemed to thrill with mystery; men seemed to stand, as it were, on a height dividing past from future. The past lay dead, it could never be redeemed; the sins, crimes, follies, vices, miseries of the year were over. The new year, untried, as yet, lay before them, white and untraced as the snow.

What died that night when the knell of the old year sounded? Who shall say? What hopes, what love, what happiness, what dreams and visions, what realities, what joys and anticipations, all dead, crushed, trodden, like summer leaves underfoot, dead? What was borne when the chime of the new year's birth rang through the land? The same hopes and fears as those that lay dead, only they lay in other hearts, listening, men said.

The new year has come; please God, it will bring me luck and happiness, and the babe of time, the infant year, would smile, knowing it would but live and die as the other years had done.

A strange night and a strange time too for a love-tryst, but I knew that I must either see Clara Vernay that hour and that night, or not until her return from France.

I loved her with all my heart, but I could not go to her mother's house and ask to see her, simply because her mother, from some unknown reason, had taken a great dislike to me, a dislike so intense that she could not endure my name to be mentioned before her. None knew why. It made no difference to us, only that I could not see Clara at her own house, and when we wished to meet we had to arrange both time and place.

The "place" this time was the meadow that led to Vine Cottage, where Mrs. Vernay lived, a pretty little house nestling in the midst of the Highgate hills. It seemed to me almost cruel to ask Clara to come out in the cold and the frost, but I could see her in no other way. She was not able to leave home, as her mother kept her continually busy at the preparations for departure; so it was arranged that I should go there and wait for her against the stile until she could find a few minutes to run down and see me.

So I stood listening to the pealing of the bells and watching the drifting clouds that hurried along the sky, listening to the moaning of the wind, and wondering, as the young always wonder, what the year would bring for me.

What would it bring—happiness, prosperity, or sorrow? Would it bring love or sadness? What did the wild wail of the wind mean—was it prophesying evil to come?

Then Clara Vernay, the girl I loved better than my life, came quietly out of the cottage and stood before me.

"I have not many minutes, Adrian," she said. "Mamma is not well, and she is very fidgety; she has a fixed idea that I shall forget something very important."

I did not wait for any more—men are not proverbial for patience when a lovely face is near them in the moonlight. I clasped her in my arms and kissed her sweet lips, while the bells pealed out;

"The old year is dying, dying to-night."
Adrian," said my darling, "you really should not do that."

She had wrapped a fur cloak round her, and on her beautiful head she had a warm scarlet handkerchief. I thought she had never looked so bewitching.

"I cannot help it, Clara; it is the new year, and I want to wish you all kinds of happiness."

She had a very earnest way of speaking, this fair-haired love of mine. She folded her hands, and laid them on my breast.

"Oh, Adrian," she said, "do you think that there will be any happiness come for us this year—what do you think?"

Her blue eyes, so tender and so winsome, looked into mine; her sweet lips trembled ever so little.

"I have been listening to the wind all night," she continued, "and it is so mournful. Oh, Adrian, will this be another year of waiting, without hope, do you think?"

"I hope not, darling. The chief sorrow that I foresee in the coming year is that you will be so far away from me."

"I shall like it better," she cried, eagerly. "When I am in Paris I shall know that I cannot see you, the deep sea will be between us. Here, in London, I cannot help feeling wretched, because I know that you are so near me, and yet we can never meet."

"There is a dreary kind of comfort in that," I replied. "Clara, do you think your mother will ever like me any better than she does now?"

"No," was the sorrowful reply. "I never dare to mention your name; the least allusion to you seems enough to craze her."

"Then, my darling, what shall we do? Will you ever consent to marry me against her wish?"

"I cannot tell; I trust to time and patience. Do you know, Adrian, that every night, when I say my prayers, I add this: 'God soften my mother's heart, and make her love Adrian.' So, in time, He will, and we must wait."

"But is it not strange that she should hate me so, when she has never seen me? Can it be that she fears I love you, and wants to keep me from you?"

"No, she does not love me so much that the dread of losing me would make her uncivil to any one who cared for me. I do not understand my mother; I am often puzzled over her. One would think there was something in her life, a secret that enfolded her and made her different to everyone else. I wonder if it be so?"

But I, being more practical and matter of fact, only laughed at this idea.

"You must write to me very often, Clara. Do you think you will like living in Paris?"

"Yes; my engagement seems a very pleasant one. I have to teach one little girl, a very nice little child, her mother wishes her to speak English perfectly. Madame de Boulain is a widow, and I am to live with her. But, Adrian, that is enough of me. What lies before you this new year?"

"The old story, darling—hard work and poor remuneration. Sometimes in my dreams I see brighter prospects, but those dreams will never be realised."

"What are they?" she asked.

"I have never said anything to you, Clara, but my father's brother is a very rich man. He lives at Oakleigh Hall, and is supposed to have saved an enormous fortune. Now suppose, only suppose, that he should die and make me his heir?"

"Is it probable?" she asked.

"No, not at all. He was married, I know, and then some great sorrow came to him, but what that sorrow was I never heard. His name is Laurence Hope."

"Ah, well, do not dream about him, Adrian. For us there will be nothing but hard work. After all, it is very pleasant when brightened and lightened by love."

And my darling's face looked so fair in the moonlight, her eyes so tender and true, that I thought then, as I think now, the treasure of her love far outweighs all else.

We had wandered from the stile down to the garden gate, and the evergreens gleamed out so brightly in the moonlight that I bent down and gathered a spray of laurustinus, one delicate spray, with its glossy green leaves and fair white blossoms. I gave it to her and bade her keep it for my sake. I had not dared to make her any presents lest her mother should, finding them, discover our engagement. I knew she would value this one spray of laurustinus more than other girls value diamonds.

"Hark!" said Clara, suddenly. "There is the old church clock striking. Oh, Adrian, listen—
the old year is dying now."

And as we stood there with clasped hands, it died. Can I ever forget how solemn the fair young face grew?

"It is gathered to the long roll of departed years," she said. "Oh, Adrian, I could almost ask you, like a child, where they go, those worn-out years."

But I took her in my arms again; and kissing her, wished her a very happy new year and prayed God to bless her and send her prosperity and happiness.

"I will not say only a happy new year, Clara; but I pray God to make it the very happiest of your life."

How little we thought, how far we were from guessing, all that this new year would bring; and if we had known, what should we have said to each other as we stood there with the winter's snow around us, and the weird music of the wind mingling with the chime of the bells?

CHAPTER II.

Perhaps I should go back a little and tell my reader how I, Adrian Hope, came to love this fair-haired girl, whom I believed to be peerless amongst women. No need for many words. My father, Vernon Hope, was a clergyman of the Church of England. How he came to be a poor curate instead of a rich rector, I cannot tell; but it was so. He had an only brother, Lawrence Hope, of Oakleigh Hall, and why they quarrelled, I cannot tell. My father was a man of very peculiar notions; my uncle endowed with strong prejudices. They did not agree; and my father gave up the rich living of Oakton that was in my uncle's gift, and accepted a small curacy in London.

I was his only child; yet even to me he never mentioned my uncle's name above once or twice in his life; there was no communication between them. My father caught the fever that at one time prevailed so terribly in London, and died. At his death, my mother received from Lawrence Hope a certain sum of money that he said was always set aside for the widows of younger sons, and on that she lived.

But that money seemed to be unlucky. My mother's solicitor had invested it in the Royal Pomona Mining Company; and the very week in which my mother died, that Company broke, and was discovered to be a delusion and a snare.

If my mother had lived to know it and to want it, it would have gone hard with me; but with youth, health, strength, and a good education, I could not make a heavy trouble of it.

After some little time, I found a situation in a large bank, and received a hundred pounds per annum salary, with a promise of still further increase. I had very nice lodgings in Holloway, and was altogether as comfortable as a young man could expect to be.

My mother had said to me once—

"Adrian, your uncle, Laurence Hope, is not happily married, and if anything should happen to you must be his heir."

A probability that seemed to me as great as that the Khan of Tartary should make me his prime minister.

The idea did not often occur to me, the fact being that my Uncle Laurence was a very indifferent object to me; I only thought of him as the man who had been unkind to my father.

I was then twenty-three years of age, happy in my employment, happy in myself, when suddenly I woke from this dream of contentment to taste the highest earthly bliss—I fell in love.

Those are weak words in which to tell of the Paradise that seemed suddenly to open to me.

It came about accidentally. I was going home to Holloway one afternoon in the omnibus, when a young lady entered, carrying a roll of music in her hand. At first I did not, that I remember, look at her; but after a time my eyes quite accidentally fell upon her face, and I was startled to find it one of the loveliest ever seen.

I cannot describe it. No poet's dream, no artist's fancy, was ever half so fair. She had a white, clear brow, from which the fair hair was drawn in shining folds—arched, dark brows, and eyes blue as the heavens; a face fair as lilies and roses, with sweet sensitive lips, and a girlish figure, full of graceful curves.

Do you believe in love at first sight, reader?

I do. I can only say that before those sweet lips opened to utter one word to me, before even she herself was perhaps aware of my existence, I loved her. I was busily occupied in thinking how I should find out her name, and all about her, when the omnibus stopped, and she got out. As a matter of course I followed.

Either the omnibus went on too soon, or she stumbled. I caught her in time to prevent her from falling, but her roll of music, consisting of many pieces, was scattered far and wide.

It so happened that the day was both muddy and wet. She looked about her in alarm.

"Oh, my music!" she cried.

"Pray do not be distressed; I will collect all for you, if you will allow me."

And I did so. Some of the songs were woefully bespattered with mud; but quickly as possible I recovered them, tried to cleanse them, and made up the roll again for her.

"How am I to thank you?" she asked, raising those lovely eyes to mine.

"If it were not rude to say so," I replied warmly, "I should call that the most fortunate gust of wind that ever blew. I was longing to speak to you, and it has given me a chance."

Her face flushed, and she drew back from me; but she soon saw that I was not only innocent of all intention to offend her, but that I was really in love with her.

It would take too long to describe the progress of my love-affair, but I found that my darling's name was Clara Vernay, and that she lived with her mother in a little cottage at Highgate.

When I knew her mother's name and address, I wrote to her at once, telling her that I loved her daughter, and prayed her permission to pay my addresses to her. I signed my name in full, "Adrian T. Hope."

The answer came back to me; so strangely worded, that I place it, reader, before you.

"I hate the very sound of your name. I know nothing of you, but your name is so utterly hateful to me, I would rather bury my daughter than know that she cared for you."

"ISABELLE VERNAY."

I thought that the strangest letter ever

written, and decided immediately on going to see her. Perhaps, I foolishly thought she might like me when she saw me, for I was considered a handsome man. I went to Vine Cottage, and without giving my name, asked to see its mistress.

A little maid servant ushered me into a room, where in a few minutes I was joined by a tall and stately lady. How shall I describe her face? It had been beautiful, but it looked as though a breath of fire had passed over it; there were deep lines upon it; the dark eyes were full of fire, terrible almost in their strange beauty. What made the face so terrible? There had been passion and fire there, there had been power and genius, some terrible force had laid them all waste. She reminded me of some dark, beautiful flower, with a terrible canker eating its heart away. Something—sorrow, remorse, discontent, the knowledge of some secret—had eaten this woman's beauty, and life, and heart away.

The chief trait in her features was indomitable pride. She looked as though it would be utterly impossible to subdue her or quell her spirit.

She made a courteous salutation to me when she entered, but no sooner had I mentioned one word of my errand than she stood up, with a look of terrible living hate on her face.

"Your name is Hope," she said, "yet after my letter you have dared to come before me?"

"I am so utterly unconscious of all cause of offence, madam," I began, but she interrupted me with a passionate gesture.

"Long years ago," she said, "I laid my curse on all who bore that name; I hate it. If my daughter ever cares for you, ever loves you, ever marries you, she ceases to be my child."

"But, madam," I interrupted, "I love her so dearly."

"Then learn to forget her," she said, with a savage laugh, "even if your heart breaks over it. Remember, there have been broken hearts before. I should like to know that a Hope suffers. If I could I would put all the race under the same ban."

"I can only pray God, madam, to send you a more Christian disposition and a more womanly heart."

"When a Hope takes to praying," she retorted, with a bitter sneer, "the saints may look out."

I tried to reason with her, but she had nothing for me, save the most bitter invective and insult. I left her, hopeless of ever being on any better terms with her, hopeless of ever understanding her. It seemed to me so foolish, this prejudice against a name.

That same evening, Clara wrote a little heart-broken note.

"DEAREST ADRIAN.—We must part—there is no help for it. My mother has forbidden me to see you or speak to you again."

I did what any other young man in my position would have done—haunted Vine Cottage until I saw my love again; then her face was pale, her eyes dim with weeping.

I humbly ask Heaven to forgive me if I did wrong, but I told her she had promised to love me, promised to be my wife, and that she was bound to me for ever and for ever. I should not release her. I believe that I frightened her into being true to me. Then we began our dreary course of waiting and hoping against hope. We had been engaged two years and had no comfort except our love for each other.

Then an excellent situation was offered to Clara in Paris, and her mother insisted upon her taking it. She was to start on New Year's Day, and I went to bid her farewell on New Year's Eve.

So we parted, my love and I, with sorrow and tears, little—ah, so little dreaming how and when we should meet again.

CHAPTER III.

I fear almost that my readers may think I am writing a romance, when I say that late as it was when I reached home, I found a letter awaiting me. Strange to tell, it was from my Uncle Laurence Hope's housekeeper, to say that he was dying, and I must go to see him at once.

It was half-past one then, but I lost no time. I drove to the railway-station, and found that a train would pass Oakton at about five in the morning. I was

doctors are with him, but they fear every moment will be his last."

I passed through a magnificent entrance-hall, up a broad staircase, where the crimson carpets contrasted with the white gleam of statues and the green of flowering plants, through luxuriously furnished rooms, until I came to the one where the master of the house lay.

A curtain of thick crimson velvet fell before the door, it was drawn aside, and I entered the spacious chamber where Laurence Hope lay. I saw the nurse with a small phial in her hand anxiously counting some drops that fell into a glass, the doctor bending over his patient, and on the bed lay an elderly man, on whose face the grey shade of death was stealing.

Doctor and nurse looked up thankfully when I entered.

"You are none too soon," said the doctor.

I went at once to the bedside and bent over the dying man.

"Uncle," I said, "I am Adrian Hope, Vernon Hope's son, and because you want me I have come."

He looked up at me, his eyes lingered long and wistfully on my face.

"Ah, thank God!" he said, with a deep sigh. "It is a good face, I can trust to it."

Then he laid his hand in mine, but the clasp was very feeble; death was already busy with him.

"Adrian," he said faintly, "I ought to have known you before. I am dying now, and have little strength to talk to you."

I knelt down, so that I could the better hear that faint, feeble voice.

"I am a very rich man," he said; "but, you see, money cannot save me now—it cannot help me."

My mother had taught me to fear God, and I tried to say something to him about the boundless riches of that other world.

"You are a good man," he said, "thank God—thank God, I have been hard all my life—hard to everyone; and my punishment is that I am dying alone."

"Not quite alone now, uncle," I said. "I am of your race and your name."

"Yet I had dearer ties. I drove your father away from me in anger; and I had a wife and child once, Adrian. It is of them I wish to speak to you. I must tell you a story, for which you will despise me, I know."

"I did not marry young: I was over forty years of age when I first met the lady who afterwards became my wife; and, listen, Adrian—I had some good qualities, but they were all overshadowed and spoiled by my one great failing—jealousy.

"I loved the woman I married, God pardon me, with such a jealous, passionate love. I wanted her whole heart, her whole thoughts; I envied every word and every look she gave to others. I believe that I even grudged her soul to heaven.

"I am sore ashamed now that I lie here and the light of eternity shows me everything so clearly. My exacting jealousy irritated my wife; I believe now that she was very fond of me, but I drove her mad with my causeless jealousy and suspicion. My brother, your father, was always kind and amiable. I can imagine now that my poor wife sought refuge in his society from my jealous taunts. Your father was married, but nothing availed; I was madly jealous of him and my worshipped wife. I counted their interviews, watched their looks, listened to their words. I allowed one trifle after another to bias and prejudice me. I acted more like a madman than a reasonable being, and then the climax came.

"I found your father and my wife walking one day in some part of the grounds; they were laughing, and my hot, jealous heart gave one bound. It must be that they were laughing at me, laughing to think how easily they had duped me.

"I can hardly tell you what followed. I only remember a scene of blind rage and mad fury. I cursed your father, accused him of my dis-honor; I bade him go from my sight, and never to appear in my presence again. Yet he was innocent, Adrian, as you are.

"Then I turned to my wife. She stood there, pale, contemptuous, scornful; her eyes flaming fire, her lips quivering with anger.

"As for you, madam!" I began, but she stopped me with a gesture of queenly scorn.

"Not another word," she said. "I have loved you as well as any woman ever loved a man; I have been true to you in thought, word, and deed. You have insulted me in the grossest manner that any husband could insult his wife; I will have no more of it; you shall never insult me again!"

"She was a proud, passionate woman; and she kept her word. That night she left my house, and took our child with her. I never saw either of them again. In vain I advertised—made every inquiry; paid all kinds of agents, and offered all kinds of rewards—my wife was gone; and I felt convinced she must be dead.

"Adrian, it is nearly twenty years since and I have never heard one word of or from her. I believe she is dead, or she would surely have answered all my prayers before this. She could not live and remain in ignorance of the efforts I have made to trace her. What do you think yourself?"

"I am strongly of your opinion, uncle, that she must be dead."

"You will find, Adrian, that I have made you my heir, in trust. I am a rich man; for twenty years past I have done little but save money. I have left you ten thousand pounds irrespective of all else. In my will you will find that you are my sole heir in case my wife and child are both

dead. You are to spend three years in looking for them. Spend what you will in the search, advertise, offer rewards. Say in the advertisements that I am dead. You will find some clue, though I have failed.

"Adrian, if you find my wife living, tell her I craved her pardon before I died, I acknowledged the injustice of my suspicions; but tell her it was all because I loved her too much. You will give up all my property, Oakleigh Hall, and everything I am possessed of, except the ten thousand pounds, to her. If she be dead and my daughter, living, give her my blessing, Adrian; watch over her; make her my heiress. Even when the three years have expired, should they be still unfound, you must not relax your efforts; you must always remember that the property is held in trust for them. Give me your hand upon it."

I held his hand in my own, and I faithfully promised him to carry out his wishes to the very letter.

I longed to ask more questions. What was his wife's name? what his child's? how I should know them? But that long story had exhausted him, the grey pallor deepened on his face, and the doctor motioned to me to say no more.

"He is quite exhausted, let him rest."

So we three, the nurse, the doctor and myself, stood by in silence, while the morning of the new year dawned and broke with a beautiful purple light over the trees.

There was to be no new year for him. Just when the morning sun began to shine and the faint music of the morning began, he died.

He turned to me first. "You will not forget?" he said, and I bent over him.

"Uncle," I said, in a low voice, "I swear to you that I will never relax my efforts to find them and bring them here to your home."

We knew by the smile that came over his white lips that he had both heard and understood.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a strange New Year's Day. I went out towards afternoon into the woods, for the silent gloom of that house of death oppressed me. Through the clear frosty air came the sound of the new year bells. It seemed months since I had stood with Clara wondering what the new year would bring.

It had brought me sorrow already, for though I had known nothing of the dead man, still he was my kinsman, and I could not help grieving over him. It was such a lamentable history of a life marred by jealousy and suspicion—twenty years of solitude, unblest by wife and child; all that he loved best driven from him by his own evil passions.

I saw that afternoon such a pretty picture. The ground was covered with snow—the trees were all fringed with it, and on one bough, swaying to and fro, I saw a robin redbreast.

Then I began to wonder why a bird looked more beautiful in winter than in summer, and my thoughts flew to Clara.

Perhaps, now that I had ten thousand pounds, I might persuade her to marry me. The fact of my having money might make Mrs. Vernay more amiable, and if not, why then perhaps Clara would marry me without her permission.

After all, the New Year had brought me something; ten thousand pounds was not to be despised. Walking there while the blue light became purple, I vowed to myself that I would never look upon Oakleigh Hall as my own, but simply as held in trust. That same day I wrote to Clara, and told her all that had happened to me.

At the end of the week Laurence Hope was buried. After the funeral the will was read. I found it contained exactly the wishes he had expressed to me; there was a legacy for each servant, for the nurse who had been with him during his illness, and for the doctor; no one was forgotten.

Mr. Plymouth, who had been my uncle's solicitor for many years, came to me.

"What do you intend to do, Mr. Hope?" he asked.

"I shall carry out my uncle's wishes exactly. I shall live at Oakleigh Hall, and make the finding of his wife and child the object of my life."

"You are right," he replied; "but I do not think you will find them. My opinion has always been that Mrs. Laurence Hope destroyed herself and her child; I may be mistaken. I cannot help the impression."

"You will do your best to help me?" I asked, and he promised that he would.

It was with a strange sensation I woke on the morning after the funeral; the gloom and depression had gone from the house; the blinds were drawn up, the windows thrown open; the grim presence of death was no longer felt. There I was, master of this magnificent home, yet after all it was not mine.

Breakfast was laid for me in the pretty breakfast-room that looked to the south. "The king is dead, long live the king." I wondered if the servants, who waited upon me so attentively, knew that I was not the real master, but that I only held everything on trust.

After breakfast I went over the house, and for the first time saw its full extent and magnificence. I saw the broad, noble corridors, the grand picture gallery, the superb suites of reception rooms, the drawing rooms, the cosy little boudoir that Laurence Hope had prepared for his wife, the numberless bed-chambers, all luxuriously furnished, the library, combining the collections of many generations. I saw the

costly array of gold and silver plate, the superb pictures, statues that were priceless in value, and I thought to myself that the possessor of all this, with an income of ten thousand per annum, ought indeed to be happy.

I thought I should never have seen the last of the glories of Oakleigh Hall. The park was well stocked with deer, the conservatories with rare flowers, there was a fernery of great extent, and glass houses in which even at winter time the fruit hung ripe. Was there any want or wish the human heart could frame that could not be gratified there?

I have no wish to make myself out a model of virtue, but I can honestly declare that no such greedy, envious longing ever entered my mind.

It was all very beautiful, but it was not mine; I was holding it in trust for an injured woman and her child. I was very careful; I spent no unnecessary money, simply because it was not mine to spend; but I gave myself a whole week's holiday in which to enjoy Oakleigh Hall before I began my search.

The third week in January I sent for Mr. Plymouth and we held a long consultation. I found that no trace of the lost lady had ever been discovered. Some of the servants were living in the house now who had been with my uncle when it happened; from them I gathered this: that at night everything seemed as usual, only that Mrs. Hope would insist upon sleeping with her little girl: and that when they rose in the morning mother and child had both disappeared. No one knew where they had gone—no one had seen them go—nor had one single word been heard of them since.

There was little clue in that story; but it was all I ever had. I thought the best plan was to employ an able and intelligent private detective, and offer him a handsome reward for information. I mentioned my idea to Mr. Plymouth; he shrugged his shoulders.

"If they do make anything out, I shall think more highly of detective officers than I have ever done yet. I cannot remember any case in which they have done wonders."

I could think of nothing else, so I sent for Captain Housely, who was said to be the cleverest detective in England. I told him every particular.

"Money is no object," I said, "in this case. Spend freely, spare no expense. I will pay you a regular weekly salary, and if you succeed I will give you a thousand pounds."

"It is so long since it happened," he said, "doubtfully—twenty years—the lady may have left England, may have died in some strange hospital. In fact, there is no end to the chapter of accidents that may have occurred."

"Prove any one of them," I said, "and the money is yours."

"Can you tell me what kind of woman she was? Was she dark or fair—tall, stout, or what?"

I rang the bell and sent for the housekeeper. I asked her to describe Mrs. Laurence Hope as she remembered her twenty years ago.

"She was a tall lady, sir—tall and stately, with beautiful dark eyes that shone like stars. She was very passionate and very proud, but we all loved the ground she walked upon."

"Should you know her again?" I asked.

"That I should, sir—people never forget a face like hers."

And on that vague information Captain Housely began his search. I did my duty by continually framing fresh advertisements and sending to all parts of the world. My spare time I filled up by trying to persuade Clara to marry me.

I told her that we could never look upon Oakleigh Hall as home, but that if she would only consent, I would take some pretty little house near it, and we might be so happy.

But though Clara loved me well, she was, as all good daughters are, naturally unwilling to do anything in opposition to her mother's wish.

"I am coming home at Christmas," she wrote, "for my holidays, and then I shall make such an appeal to my mother that she will not be able to resist. Let me be with her for a week or two alone."

So I promised myself that I would wait in patience until the seventh or eighth of the next January, then I would go and see her, and force her mother into some kind of consent.

The summer and autumn passed happily enough—no man has much leisure who holds a large estate like Oakleigh in trust.

It was about Christmas time when I received a letter from Captain Housely.

"I am on the track," he wrote. "I cannot say more at present, but I believe I shall succeed at last."

Need I say that I answered that letter at once, telling Captain Housely that if once he could be sure, to bring the lady or ladies direct to Oakleigh.

I would have joined him, but that he told me if I appeared in the matter I should spoil all, so I waited, patiently as possible.

He wrote again, and told me that there was no mistake, he had found the right people at last.

"I shall not lose sight of them for one instant," he said, "but the first day I can make sufficient impression on the lady, whom I believe to be Mrs. Laurence Hope, I shall bring her a once to Oakleigh."

So there was nothing for it but to wait until he came. Christmas passed, and strange to say, it was on the morning of New Year's Eve I received Captain Housely's last letter, saying that they would reach Oakleigh that very night.

I was pleased, because it gave me time to go to London to see Clara Vernay.

CHAPTER V.

There have been eventful days in my life, but none like this New Year's Eve.

It was bitterly cold, and the wind was holding high carnival in the park; it rose and fell with wild, unearthly cries; when it was quite I could just faintly distinguish the chiming of the bells of Oakton Church.

Twelve months since I had stood on Highgate Hill, holding Clara's hand in mine. Should I really see her again? Could it be that the future held so rich a prize in store for me as life with Clara?

I longed for the strangers to come, to give up possession of Oakleigh, and be able to devote all my time to the girl I loved so dearly.

They were to come that night, and I had given orders that all the rooms should be warmed with good fires and well lighted, also that a *recherché* dinner should be prepared. If it was really the mistress of Oakleigh coming home, let her be received in all honor.

I said nothing to the servants but that I expected visitors, and then waited in silence. Mr. Plymouth joined me, but we did not talk, we were both too much interested and too anxious for that.

I could not help wondering what they would be like, those strangers; what they would do and say. It seemed unreal; I could not help fancying myself an actor in a play, waiting to take my part.

It was growing dusk, and I stood at the library window watching the fading light, when I saw a carriage driving up to the front entrance. At the moment I felt, perhaps, more agitated than the strangers themselves.

"They are come," I said, turning to Mr. Plymouth. "You go and receive them; I will wait here."

He went. I heard the sound of voices, Captain House's above the other; then the library door opened, and the lawyer returned, leading two ladies clad in deep mourning.

I stepped forward to welcome them, and then cried out in wonder too great for words.

It was Mrs. Vernay and Clara, my betrothed wife, who stood before me! I would have greeted them, but my lips seemed dumb and mute. It was Clara who spoke, and she said:

"Oh, Adrian, I did not know. My mother only told me this morning that I was coming home; she did not tell me where that home was."

I took her hand, but it was at her mother's proud, cold face I looked.

"Are you indeed my uncle's wife?" I asked.

"In very truth I was," she replied, "though I left him and cursed his name."

"Did you know that I was his nephew when you drove me from your presence?"

"I did; I knew you were Vernon Hope's son."

"And even for my father's sake you were not kind to me?"

"No, for I hated the name; for nearly twenty years I have been a solitary, wretched woman. Content to suffer myself, because I knew that he must be suffering still more, I read his advertisements, his printed prayers, and laughed at them, let him suffer. I read of his death, but if your agent had not found me out, Adrian Hope, I would never have made myself known."

It does not belong to my story to tell how Captain Housely had found her



“HARD PRESSED.”—By R. ANSDELL, R.A.

APRIL 11, 1874.



"THE STUDENT."—By MR. DOBSON, R.A.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 1874.

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FRIGHTENING CHILDREN.

The following true story, related by a lady, shows what comes of frightening children:—A few years since I resided in Wales, at the entrance of a valley, opening into a beautiful bay, on each side of which rise high cliffs of limestone, covered with soft turf, on which the Welsh sheep feed, and climb like goats. On the highest of these cliff stood a solitary cottage overlooking the wide expanse of sea; on which "during every month in the year that has the letter R in it," the little oyster-boats are seen out in great numbers. The poor men dredge for these with heavy iron nets; it is a very laborious work; but as they can generally sell their oysters, they are glad to do it. You know the tide, on nearly all the coasts, ebbs and flows, and these little boats go out with the tide, and they cannot return to land until it flows in again, and thus carries them ashore. In this cottage on the cliff lived one of those poor men, whose name was John Tovey, with his wife and sixteen children. Some of the elder ones had grown up, and were married, and had gone to live elsewhere; some were out at service; some worked in the potato fields; and the little ones were often left at home by themselves. The fern, which grows on the cliffs, the poor people cut and use in the winter for various purposes. There was a small rick of this fern standing a few yards from the house. The cottage was whitewashed, and had a thatched roof. When these children did anything that was naughty or the mother was angry with them, she used to tell them that an ugly "Old Man" lived in the rick, and that if they were not good, he would "come and have them." So these poor, ignorant children believed what the mother so often told them, and they wished very much that the frightful "Old Man" did not live there always. So, one day, when their mother was gone to market to sell her potatoes, and the father was out in his boat dredging for oysters there were three of these little children staying at home by themselves; and they talked about this "Horrid old Man" in the rick, and thought that they would burn him out! So they set fire to the rick, which was all in flames in a few minutes, and they went and sat down under a hedge at the edge of a cliff to watch; perhaps they expected to see the "Old Man" run out when he felt the fire—or else they hoped that he would be quite burned to death, and so never trouble them any more. The fire blazed very high, presently caught the cottage also, and so it all burnt away together. Just then the father, who was off in his boat saw

his house and all on fire, and he knew that the little children were there alone, and yet he could not come to them till the tide turned, and for this he had to wait several hours. Oh, how very greatly distressed he must have been not to be able to get home to see if his poor children were burned! So, late in the evening, the mother returned from market, and soon the father also, and found the house entirely burnt down, and everything in it, all but the stone walls; and the poor little children still sitting under the hedge, so frightened that they did not know what to do. They were obliged to go and beg some kind persons in the next village to take them in that night. And I hoped the parents learned a lesson, never again to tell their children what was untrue, and never to try to frighten them. It is very wicked to frighten children; for there is nothing of which children need to be afraid, except of doing wrong. A few years ago a young man was brought before Mr. Hammill, a London magistrate, for kicking, and striking, and trying to choke an officer and a student. Poor young man, it was not his fault, for he did not know what he was doing; he was mad. And how do you think he went mad? His mother said, "Sir, he is subject to fits of a dreadful character, and all because, when six years of age, he was put into a dark room as a punishment, shortly after which the fits came on and have become worse. Our circumstances were once bright, but we have spent so much money in trying to cure him, that we are now quite poor. The fits come on every two hours, and then he is like a maniac." Mr. Hammill said, "This is a shocking result of frightening children." You had better show this to your parents and to your servants.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

"THE STUDENT."

From the picture by Mr. Dobson, R.A., which we produce, it would appear that the artistic ideal of a "student" may be something very much more charming, and very much less awful, than the associations the word will be apt to call up in more prosaic or unpictorial minds. This is no worn and fanatic book-worm, with lofty brow, and sunken eye, and pallid cheek—save where the hectic spot reveals the latent excitement; no solver of abstruse mathematical problems; no speculator in the labyrinth of metaphysics; no diver into the profound mysteries of science; no aged pilgrim groping along the dusty, overgrown by-paths of archaeology. The fair "student" of the picture does not in the least suggest the midnight oil or the recluse of the library; on the contrary she is fresh as a rosebud, and her learning she acquires in the open air and the sunshine, among the flowers, and the leaves, and the birds. What the subject of her researches may be we cannot say, but we venture to assert that her "reading up" of the subject, whatever it be, is amusing rather than laborious, and from the outer aspect of the volume she holds we have no doubt it is full of pretty illustrations. One may smile but can hardly wonder at the painter's notion of studentship, for are not an artist's studies directed chiefly to the pleasant picture-book of Nature?

HOW THE "LONE STAR"
WENT DOWN.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING.

The picture hung over the fireplace, and had a fascination for me for which I could never account. It wasn't by any means a work of art. Bertie Carrington, late major of Her Majesty's—th, had painted it with his own hand, and Bertie at best was only a second-rate amateur. It wasn't, then, its artistic merits, you perceive, and yet I never entered Carrington's rooms without drawing my chair in front of that crude production in oil, and staring at it through the smoke of my meerschaum by the hour together. The picture was this:—

A wide, sunlit sea, lying like gilded glass beneath a sky of cloudless ultramarine. A huge, black ship grounded on a reef, so filled and sunken that the oily, slippery waves were just softly gliding over the decks. Around the doomed vessel dozes of dark objects moved, stealthily. Sharks! On the deck a long file of men, drawn up as if on parade, in the shadow. And out where the brilliant light of the sun fell fullest, a man and woman together. It was the face of the woman, I think, that had the fascination for me. The face of a girl in her first youth, and beautiful beyond the ordinary beauty of girlhood or else idealized by the artist. Her loose hair blew back in the gale. Her face lay on the man's shoulder, uplifted to the sky, and on that face lay an unearthly expression of joy and peace, such as no words of mine can describe. Death was at her side, but love had robbed death of its sting. That was what that radiant, transfigured gaze said to you. One arm of the man held her close, the other lay on the ship's side, his head bowed thereon.

That was the picture.

"I like pictures that tell a story," I said, the

first time I saw it, to Carrington. "This one does. It's the best thing you've done yet, old man."

And Carrington, usually the freest and most genial of good fellows, had turned away, his face changing and darkening so suddenly that I saw at once I was on forbidden ground.

The picture had a story, then—a painful one to him; and though I took my station before it every time I visited him, I never tried praise or criticism more.

But one Christmas Eve, as we sat alone together, the tragic story at my earnest entreaty was told.

It was a wild and snowy December evening, I remember, a high gale abroad, and black London lying all white and frozen under the Christmas stars, as I made my way to Carrington's house.

I found him alone, as I expected to find him, his Livonian wolf-hound curled at his feet, lying back in an easy chair before a huge fire, smoking, and gazing, as I was wont to do, at his picture over the mantelshelf. In the strong red light of the fire, the beautiful face of the girl shone out weirdly lifelike from the canvas.

"Admiring your own handiwork, Bertie, my boy?" I said, as I flung myself into the opposite chair, and fell to gazing too.

"Not exactly," Carrington, answered, gruffly. "I've never done anything in the paint-brush line worth admiring that I know of. Whatever merit that may have—and I suppose it has some, or you wouldn't stare at it as you do—is owing to its truth. Hamilton, I tell you I often wake at night and see that girl's face before me, with just that expression, as I saw it last, poor child, before it went down for ever!"

"I should like to hear the story, Carrington, if you don't mind," said I, while the red flames leaped and glowed, lighting up the lovely pictured face.

"It is twenty years ago," said Carrington. "It seems only yesterday as I sit here and think of it. Twenty years ago, and before your time, youngster, the Lone Star, a transport vessel, employed to take out detachments to various regiments in India, with the wives and children, sailed from Southampton. I was an ensign at the time, my commission as new as my uniform, my zeal as burning as the fiery climate to which we were ordered. Our commanding officer was Colonel Beresford, his second in command, Captain Hawley, one of the bravest and best-looking fellows in the service, of good family, but without a rap in the world except his pay, and not a single shadow of expectations. He was the best of good fellows in every way, ready to tell you a capital story, a good joke, or troll you off a song in his rich tenor, and before we were out a week the pet of all the women on board. There were some hundreds of 'em and heaps of children. Hawley was a favorite with the little 'uns in the steerage, as well as the ladies in the cabin—prime favorite, in short, with officers, men, and all; and so, when pretty Miss Rainsbrooke took it into her bewitching head to fall in love with him almost at sight, nobody was the least in the world surprised. Only, it wouldn't do; and so Hawley knew as well as any of us.

"She was, I think, Hamilton without exception, the prettiest girl I ever saw, and I've seen some pretty girls in my forty odd years of life, mind you. She was exceptionally pretty, in fact. No, you needn't look at that daub; it does her no sort of justice. She had your real golden hair—none of the copper-coloured stuff they pile mountainously on their heads now—eyes sapphire blue to their very depths, laughing and lovely, a complexion of pearl, and a mouth the sweetest that ever was kissed. She was tall and graceful, accomplished beyond all telling, and just nineteen. The previous season she had 'come out' been presented, ran the round of Vanity Fair, and the best men of the day had been at her feet as suitors; but she had laughed back 'No' to one and all, come out of the ordeal unscathed, and now, under the protecting wing of Mrs. Colonel Beresford, was going out to join 'Dear papa' in India.

"Dear papa was General Rainsbrooke, K.C.B., next heir to an earldom, and with the pride of Lucifer incarnate. The man who won the fair Alexia, with her birth and her beauty, and her dowry, must write his name high in the peerage indeed. Royalty itself would not have been one whit too high for Miss Alexia, Rainsbrooke in the eyes of the sternest, haughtiest martinet of the service. And with Frank Hawley she had fallen in love, as I say, almost at sight, and he with her.

"And it was love, Hamilton—none of your modern, silver-gilt shams, but the pure gold. They loved each other, and if ever two were made for each other they were—that was the unanimous verdict on board.

"But it won't do, Hawley, my lad," said Colonel Beresford, soft-hearted himself as a woman. "You don't know old Rainsbrooke—I do. He'd see her dead first. And you're too fine a fellow to have your life spoiled by any woman, were she Venus herself. Alexia's an angel, but angels with flinty feathers don't marry young men whose fortune lies in their sword blade. She's an angel, but she's not for you, so give it up before it's too late."

"Frank Hawley looked at him with a smile.

"Too late," he said. "It's that now, colonel. Come what may, I shall love Alexia to the last day of my life, and she will love me. All the fathers in the world cannot alter that. My wife she can never be—that I know; but she does love me, and come what will, I have been blessed."

"She knew it, too—knew that the end of the voyage would be the end of her life's romance

—and yet in the present they could still be happy. If he had asked her, she would have promised to brave all things, and go with him to beggary, but it would have been easier for him to have died than have asked it.

"The weeks went by, and our voyage was drawing to an end, the pretty ocean idly to its close, and of late the lovely face of Alexia Rainsbrooke had saddened and grown pale. The lifelong parting was near. She was realizing its bitterness already.

"I was awakened one morning just as day was breaking by an old crashing sound beneath, than all at once motion ceased, and the ship stood still. Immediately there followed, wild uproar and tumult, shrieks of women, and shouts of men. I sprang up, dressed, rushed on deck, and in one minute knew what had happened. We had got out of our latitude, and had struck.

"The sun rose as I stood there—the sun of Christmas Day—and showed us our danger fully. We were near Simon Bay, and far off in the horizon the land line was visible, but we might as well have been a thousand miles off, for already the ship was filling and sinking fast. Before noon of this radiant Christmas morning the Lone Star would be at the bottom.

"Out of the confusion order came at last. The soldiers were drawn up on deck by Colonel Beresford, standing firmly as if on parade, the boats were lowered and manned, the women and children put in, and sent safely to the land. I see it all—the brilliant tropic sun in the cloudless morning sky, the soft breeze blowing, the sea a sea of glass, the long line of men standing firmly erect awaiting their doom, the sobbing, heart-breaking cries of the wives who would never see their husbands more, the ship sinking, sinking inch by inch, and the black devils of sharks swimming slowly round and round, knowing in some horrible way what had happened and waiting for their prey. Brave men, I tell you, lad, stood on that deck, but the bravest there flinched as they looked at their deadly maws. Before night the women and children would safely reach the land—before noon the Lone Star would go down.

"Captain Hawley was one of the men who helped the women into the boats. As Mrs. Beresford descended he asked after Miss Rainsbrooke. Only once since the accident had he caught sight of her. But the colonel's wife, terrified and hysterical, knew nothing.

"Alexia was in one of the other boats—she couldn't tell which. She had come and wished her good bye. And then, incoherent and wild, Mrs. Beresford was in her place. He could not leave his post. No doubt she was in one of the other boats, only she might have come to say good bye. A deeper sadness than any sadness death could produce lay on his face. To part like this for ever—without a word!

"Then the order was given, and the boats pushed off. One long, last wailing cry of farewell from the widowed wives, and we stood to wait for death on the deck of the Lone Star.

"Frank Hawley stood with set lips a little apart, gazing; after the boats, growing mere specks now on the sunny sea, when a low and inexpressible cry from every man on board, simultaneously, made him turn round. And up from the cabin, and gliding forward, a smile on her face, came the general's daughter, straight into the arms of Hawley.

"Did you think I had gone, Frank?" she asked, with that smile. "Did you think I had left you?"

"He gazed at her—we all did—in horror.

"Great heaven, Alexia! You here?"

It was all he could say.

She put her arms around his neck, laid her golden head on his shoulder, and looked up in his agonized face.

"With you, Frank—never to part more now. I am not afraid to die like this. It is so much easier than to say good bye for ever; and tomorrow it must have been. Now it need never be, and death is more merciful than life."

"He sank down, and drew her to him, as you see them there, his face bowed, without a word. The loving, wistful eyes sought his.

"Frank, love, you are not angry? Dear, believe me, it is the happiest Christmas of my life!"

"Only she heard his answer, as he held her close; but her face took that transfigured look of love and joy, and kept it to the end.

"The slow, sunlit hours wore on. Without word or motion we stood there, our colonel at our head, faster and faster our fated ship sinking beneath us. Still slowly round and round the black fiendish sharks swam. Oh, heaven, what a death for her!"

"She did not fear it."

"I stood watching her—I could watch nothing else—all thought of my own fate lost in unutterable pity for her. As the ship gave its last tremendous heave and death-throe—at the cold, glassy waters came running over the deck, I saw him clasp her in an embrace that death itself might not sever—saw her bury her face in his bosom, then we were all in the tumultuous ocean together, and I saw no more.

"Ten men from the Lone Star reached the shore and were saved. I was one. Clinging to a portion of the wreck, how I never knew, I reached it. For yards around the blue water was crimson with blood, and the frenzied shrieks of our poor fellows, as the savage jaws of the sharks closed upon them, ring in my ears yet.

"Her face has haunted me all those years like a ghost. To exorcise it I painted that picture. And every Christmas there comes back to me that Christmas, and the angelic face of Alexia Rainsbrooke, as she went down in her lover's arms on the wreck of the Lone Star."

PAY AS YOU GO.

A word of good counsel
We ne'er should forget,
Is that which forewarns us
To keep out of debt.
For half of life's burdens
That man overthrows
Who starts out determined
To pay as he goes.

'Tis folly to listen
To those who assert
That a system of credit
Does good and not hurt.
For many have squandered
Their incomes away,
And hearts have been wrecked by
A promise to pay.

A man to be honest,
As merchant or friend,
In order to have,
Must be willing to spend.
Is it love or affection,
Or faith they bestow?
Return their full value,
And pay as you go.

He loses the sweetness
That life can impart,
Who locks up a treasure
Of wealth in his heart;
To reap a rich harvest
Of pain and regret,
When, too late, he discovers
How great was his debt.

No loss like the losing
That comes of delay
In binding the wounds that
Are bleeding to-day!
For where is the comfort
Of tears that are shed
On the face of the dying—
The grave of the dead?

A word of good counsel
We ne'er should forget;
And to keep out of danger,
Is to keep out of debt!
If peace and contentment,
And joy you would know,
Don't live upon credit,
But pay as you go!

A WOMAN'S WAY.

BY M. A. N.

"Rich and handsome—it is scarcely necessary to take the trouble to be reasonable; the very phrase 'wilful ward' has something stereotyped in it, as if the perversity were inevitable. Heigho! Miss Hamilton, you and I begin to weary of our vacation."

"Pray, sir, don't include me," said I, laughing; "a very humble companion may not express herself with the freedom of an honored guardian."

"There, Margaret, don't be a fool!" broke in the heiress, impatiently, and coloring with increased vexation as she noticed Colonel Vaughan's almost imperceptible shrug and expressive change of countenance. "You are quite free now as always to say what you think—I wish you, I entreat you to say what you think. Do I deserve to be twitted with perversity because I won't marry the first man that asks me—and such a man! Colonel Vaughan's weariness of his trust blinds him to my real interests."

Colonel Vaughan stroked his beard deliberately—it was a magnificent one; the action I had observed was a safety-valve for suppressed irritation.

"Let us confine ourselves to the truth, Kate," he said. "I am not weary of my trust, but I confess that I am sorely oppressed and harassed by it. It was none of my seeking; and it is in vain to protest against a dead man's despotism. But it is at least difficult to act well the part of guardian towards a resolute girl, whose majority, for our mutual discipline, has been postponed till she is three-and-twenty, and of whose future position as her father's probable heiress we are all kept in painful uncertainty until that period has arrived. I may surely be forgiven some anxiety to surrender my authority into a husband's hands. How old are you now?"

"Three months short of the specified majority."

"Well," he rejoined, in an accent of consternation, "you must hear reason! In the last six months you have had as many *bond à side* offers; and yet in your petulance you call this the first! Did I urge you to accept any of your other suitors whom you whistle so lightly down the wind? but now, when I see a man of sense and honor smitten to the core of his honest heart by your fair looks and saucy tongue, I own I am anxious to open your eyes to his worth. Am I to understand, Kate, that you are determined to reject Mr. Warren?"

"I am quite determined," she said, coolly. "I love hard riding after hounds—and Mr. Warren not only detests the sport, but objects to my taste for it as thoroughly unwomanly. I love society, expensive trifles, fine equipages, brilliant accessories of all kinds—dress included. Mr. Warren tells me he prefers his own fireside

to any other spot on earth, and thinks a woman is never so well dressed as when she wears a black silk gown. But my objections go farther. When my tired hunter was in the stable—for I should hunt in spite of Mr. Warren—and I had put on my black gown, I might sit down to the piano—I can play, you know, Colonel Vaughan—but in ten minutes I should find 'my lord' asleep. Read him some of Tennyson's verses, or Ruskin's rhapsodies, and he will tell you it is penny-a-lining! Unwomanly as I am, I object to be mated with a well-intentioned clown."

"Ah! A fast young lady who rides to hounds, and yet can interpret Beethoven—a coquette who spends half her income in making herself conspicuous, and yet understands *In Memoriam* and cries over the *Idylls*—is a problem hard to solve and a creature difficult to mate! I will say good morning, Miss Carrington, and give poor Warren his dismissal."

"Wait a while, sir," she said, with a mixture of anger and dignity, "and explain to me before you go why you never address me but in this tone of insulting banter. Is it part of your supposed duty as my guardian? Yet more, is it from a deliberate intention to punish and humiliate me that you seriously propose to me as a suitable husband such a man as Mr. Warren?" Colonel Vaughan looked astounded at this unexpected and emotional appeal.

"I beg your pardon, Kate, if I have unintentionally hurt your feelings."

Kate made a movement of impatience.

"If," he added, "I had addressed you more seriously, I must have adopted a tone of grave reproof and expostulation, which I fear would be less acceptable still. As regards Mr. Warren, you must consider that I do not view him in the same light as you do. I know him to be a man of excellent character and temper, and have never observed him to be below the usual intellectual average of his fellows—to be sure it has never occurred to me to apply the Tennysonian or Beethoven test. And then I have another excuse to plead. I am inexpressibly anxious to see you happily married."

Kate turned sharply from him, and began to pace leisurely up and down the apartment. Colonel Vaughan, who had taken up his hat to depart paused and watched her with an expression of severe disapprobation.

As she paced the room from end to end, Kate Carrington's tall, supple figure was seen to the fullest advantage, and in every line and inflection showed perfect symmetry and grace. Her face was olive-tinted, but with charming contour, with features clearly cut, though not of classical precision; her eyes were gray and animated, her mouth was flexible and expressive. But the crown of the heiress's beauty was her magnificent brown hair, which she wore combed back from her forehead, and falling in rippling masses to her waist. The effect of this last was too striking to be approved by a refined or fastidious mind; and, as the girl's morning-dress was of flame-colored silk, fastened about the waist with a girdle embroidered in many colors, it was small wonder that a man like Colonel Vaughan, with somewhat severe notions of female decorum, and who stood in the onerous relations of guardian to this brilliant creature, should have surveyed her with more pain than pleasure.

"Kate," he said, presently, and with an earnestness that contrasted strongly with his former tone, "I wish I had a brother's right to win you to a change in many important particulars. My sister tells me that you are going to Paris for the Christmas holidays. I wish you would stay at home."

"Because," said Kate, "your sister infuses into your mind the most intolerable suspicions. You mean that you are afraid that I do not know how to take care of myself, and shall bring disgrace sooner or later upon myself and you. I repudiate your anxiety as an intolerable insult; I am going under the care of a lady whom you yourself placed with me"—and she made a haughty movement in my direction—"and to the house of another who is known and visited by our own ambassador, and, for the rest, I shall enjoy myself in my own way. Certainly I shall not order my behavior within the narrow range of Charlotte Vaughan's bigotry and envy, nor reduce it to the characterless docility which Colonel Vaughan admires."

"Say what you will in my despite, Kate, but do not traduce my sister."

Kate shrugged her shoulders carelessly.

"How Charlotte manages to persuade a man of the world like you that she is an angel passes my comprehension. But don't let us quarrel," and she held out her hand to him with the air of a princess. "I see, having fulfilled your commission, you are anxious to be gone. We won't detain him, Margaret, unless he will stay and lunch with us, and hand us to our carriage afterwards."

"Not to-day, Kate, thank you."

He had taken the outstretched hand, and seemed for a moment to contemplate its beauty, afterwards dropping it carelessly. At least I thought so—and I was wont to watch all his movements with a keenness of observation which allowed nothing to escape.

He shook hands with me with that careful courtesy which always marked his relations with myself, and said, in a tone half comic, half earnest—

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Hamilton, if you have any interest with our heiress—which I have not—don't let her take a flying visit to Paris! She will drive the town demented!"

When he was gone, Kate drew a long breath of relief, and sat down by me.

"It is very hard, Margaret," she said, "to be misunderstood." Her voice was so soft, her ex-

pression so changed and womanly, that I wished her guardian could have seen her then. "I know," she continued, "that it is vain for me to say anything to you against the perfection of Colonel Vaughan, but I confess myself blind to that perfection."

"You know," I returned, smiling, "he has been my benefactor in no common meaning of the term, and again has found me, in yourself, another friend almost as generous as himself. But we see him from different points of view. To me he is simply superior, to you equal and guardian."

"Own that he is intolerable in the latter capacity."

"Then it is because you show him the worst side of yourself; you try his patience by your determined antagonism, and yet expect him to flatter your faults and do you homage like the rest of the world. I often think, Kate, what a noble creature you might have been had you been obliged to work for your living."

In fact, wealth almost unlimited, added to her rare gifts of mind and person, had exposed Kate Carrington for many years to such social worship and distinction as might well have turned older and wiser heads. That she could do no wrong, whatever extravagances she adopted, had been practically taught her ever since her father's death, six years before, had made her her own mistress.

Mr. Carrington's will had been a most eccentric one. It allowed an extravagant provision for her maintenance till she was of age, fixing her majority at three-and-twenty, when she was to inherit the bulk of his immense fortune on certain conditions, contained in a sealed packet delivered into the hands of the family lawyer, and which was to remain inviolate till the appointed date. What was the nature of the conditions neither herself nor those most nearly connected with the family had the slightest knowledge. Conjecture itself was at fault on the subject. The property meanwhile was to be invested by two trustees, according to certain complex arrangements, which gave a vast amount of trouble to the gentlemen officiating, who were also joint guardians over the heiress.

One of these, an elderly man, who had been a life-long friend of Mr. Carrington's, died soon after that gentleman, leaving Colonel Vaughan to bear the full weight of the undivided responsibility. Colonel Vaughan, who was himself almost in his first youth, and whose relations with the family had never been very close until within the last few months of the old merchant's life, always said he could never understand the motive which had induced him to make choice of himself in such a capacity; and, if he had consulted his own feelings, he would certainly have thrown the estate into Chancery on the death of his co-trustee, had not the will anticipated, and earnestly deprecated, such a proceeding.

Four of the six years of Kate's minority had been passed by the Colonel in active and distinguished military service abroad, so that their relations had not been at all intimate. All that had lain in his power, or that he had deemed it his duty to do for her, had been executed with a rigid conscientiousness very burdensome to himself; and, in order to atone for his inevitable absence, he associated his only sister in the actual guardianship, and she kept him strictly informed of the young lady's proceedings.

Between these two no cordiality subsisted; Miss Vaughan was many years older than her brother, and of a severe, overbearing temper, with small indulgence for the faults of a girl in Kate's position, and the latter, high-spirited and resolute herself, resented all attempts of authority or dictation.

We went to Paris in due course, and for the first six weeks our life was one continual round of gaiety. Kate was admired and flattered to the top of her bent; and, to my sorrowful surprise, she never seemed weary of either the admiration or the flattery. Our good-natured ambassador had introduced her to the top stratum of Anglo-Parisian society, so that there was no question of the respectability or even the distinction of our position; but to me it was a most wearisome one.

I liked music fairly, but Kate was a fanatic about it, and I would hear, unweary and rapturously, the same opera three times in the week.

Dancing, too, was a perfect passion with her. True, in her case, it was the very poetry of motion; but, as I sat in my character of chaperon, looking on hour after hour till daylight entered broadly through the curtained windows of the ball-room, I may be forgiven for confessing the weariness.

It was not that I felt painfully the difference between her, the ruling object of attention and homage, and myself, the unnoticed satellite, but that Kate, by this life of pleasure, belied her better nature, and was acting in deliberate defiance of the opinions and wishes of her best friends. I felt nearly sure that Colonel Vaughan was kept thoroughly acquainted with all our movements, for one of the ladies in our circle was a friend of Miss Vaughan's, and maintained a close correspondence with that lady.

Once or twice I tried to expostulate with my young mistress, but she would not bear it.

"Who knows," she said, "what bitter pill my father's will may have in store for me? A few months more and my freedom may be gone. I will be happy while I can."

"Then this gay life is your idea of happiness?" I asked.

"Of course it is! Ask Charlotte Vaughan and her brother if I have thought or capacity beyond it!"

"I know to the contrary, Kate. Why take such unceasing pains to confirm their false estimate?"

"It is not altogether false; I do love pleasure and praise in an intense degree—only I could love better things more had the chance been given me. Margaret, I will stay at home tonight on one condition—that you tell me from the beginning all about your acquaintance with Colonel Vaughan."

"My dear Kate, I have told you over and over again how good he was to me when I was a child at school, paying for my education after my dear father's death—nay, even—"

"You have never told me the details—when you saw him first—how close you intimacy was—how often he came to see you. You seem such good friends, so perfectly to understand each other, that I want to know precisely how it all came about."

I hesitated. It was very true I had never entered into such minutiae as she required, and for a reason best locked within my own heart; but I determined at this time to indulge her at whatever cost to myself.

I read in her face a yearning restlessness of feeling which confirmed a hope—a fear, shall I be bold enough to say?—which had often occurred to me before. Bound to consult her interests, what better aim could I have than to deepen a sentiment which might secure the happiness of her life?

"Do you mean," I said, "that you will spend a quiet evening at home, and refuse yourself to all, if I tell you the story of my early troubles?"

"I have a bad headache," was her answer, "and look too jaded for a successful appearance upon any stage, so that I pledge my word decisively—in proof of which I will not dress, and we will have a quiet cutlet and glass of Madeira in my own room."

We did so. Then Kate thought it chilly, probably dull, and ordered some fresh logs to be piled upon the fire of English coal.

She drew a fantastic cushioned chair close to the replenished fire, arranged her charming dress becomingly about her, crossed her dainty feet upon the fender, and trifled with the masses of her splendid hair.

"Now for your story, Margaret," she said, with her eyes fixed somewhat coolly and critically upon my face.

Somehow my heart beat and color rose with an unusual emotion almost akin to indignation. I fancied that both in manner and expression there was an almost insulting parade of her gifts of person and of fortune. I, in my low chair, with my embroidery in my hand, destined for her own use, with my quiet dress and quiet face, might well appear as a sort of foil to the brilliant heiress. Why—was the passing bitter thought—are the gifts of Heaven so unequally distributed?

"I have scarcely any story to tell," I said impatiently; "or at least I have told it you often before. I was my father's only child, and I never remember my mother. He was a teacher of drawing, nothing more; I don't think he ever called himself or thought of himself as an artist."

"But he sent you to a high-class school, Margaret?"

"He did, at a cost to his own comfort that I never knew or guessed, and with the view that I might earn my living as a governess. For some years my school-bills were punctually paid. I used to remain at school during the holidays, my father always writing to say that he was obliged to travel about the country in the vacations to take sketches, and could not have me at home. So, in point of fact, we rarely met, and scarcely knew each other. I learnt afterwards the true reason—the motive was one of heroic self-denial and concealment. Kate," I exclaimed, interrupting myself, passionately, "you have no right to force these details from me!"

She looked surprised at this unexpected ebullition, not knowing the feelings that had been working in my mind; then rose and kissed me affectionately, and stroked my heated cheek.

"Not another word, dear Margaret, if it is painful to you. I only wanted to know how you and Colonel Vaughan first met."

"Thus. He came to the school to visit some girl there whose parents were in India, and who had engaged him to send them occasional news of her welfare. I suppose he was always prone to kindly acts. Owing to some mistake, he was shown into a little parlor where I sat crying with, as I thought, a broken heart. For the last eighteen months my school-bills had been unpaid; both my mistress and myself had repeatedly written to my father on the subject, and he had replied with promises of immediate payment. He not only failed to fulfil his engagement, but after a time our letters remained unanswered, and were finally returned to us with the official 'Not known' written across the covers. The agony of apprehension and despair which this occasioned me, Kate, you can scarcely conceive. My condition was one of utter beggary and dependence; but this was as nothing compared to the frantic desire to find my father and unravel the mystery of his disappearance. The lady who was at the head of the establishment was not more worldly or unkind than hundreds of others would have been in the same position. Of course she solved the mystery easily by the one word 'swindler,' and told me bitterly that it was only charity that withheld her from turning me out of doors."

"You are not fifteen, and can hardly earn your bread," she said, "as teacher amongst the youngest children; I will, however, allow you to remain for a few weeks while I make inquiries."

of your friends as to your final destination, and with regard to the settlement of my account."

"Kate, I had not a friend in the world; and even the tie between my father and me had never been a close one. No means of discovering his whereabouts occurred to my ignorant, childish mind. I felt that I was abandoned to ruin, and my misery was intolerable."

"It was at this crisis of my fate that I first saw Colonel Vaughan. I don't know how it could have happened that he was shown into the room where I was, but I distinctly remember the fright I experienced at the *contretemps*. The sight of this handsome bearded gentleman changed my sobs and tears to stupefaction."

"I had a confused idea that he was in some way come to execute judgment on me. I suppose I must have gazed upon him in some extraordinary manner, and have looked the picture of misery, for he uttered an exclamation of pity and interest, and came and sat down near me. I was very small for my age, and looked still more the child than I really was. He took my hand in his, and drew me towards him. I don't remember what he said, but his tone and manner won my confidence at once, and I told him all my story. He listened very quietly, only asking me a question now and then, to throw light on my confused narrative."

"Ah," he said, at the end, "I dare say we can put matters straight. We will try to find your father, little one, and I have hopes we shall succeed."

"He wrote down in his pocket-book the last address which my father had given me, and shook hands with me just at the moment Mrs. Lawson entered the room to do honor to her distinguished visitor. As I hurried past her, I heard Colonel Vaughan say, 'I have some acquaintance with this young lady, and think I can explain matters to your satisfaction.'

"What more passed I do not know, but a few days afterwards I received a visit from Miss Vaughan. She told me that my school-bills were paid to the satisfaction of my mistress, and that it was her intention to take upon herself the charges of my education till I was of a suitable age to go out into the world as a governess. Of course I knew it was to the Colonel that I owed this wondrous charity, but I did not dare to say so—the arrangement was exquisitely kind and considerate. She also told me that every means had been tried to discover my father, but in vain. I never saw or heard of him again. Colonel Vaughan, whose kindness in this matter was beyond praise, conducted the investigation himself, and with unremitting patience and ingenuity followed up the traces which he discovered. He always inclined to the belief that my father was amongst the victims of a frightful railway accident that occurred about the time when he ceased to reply to our letters, and when I knew he was engaged in travelling about the country. That is all, Kate."

"Not quite all," she said. "How often did you see Colonel Vaughan while at school?"

"Not more than half-a-dozen times. I remained there as teacher till I was one-and-twenty; then Miss Vaughan got me a situation as governess, which I filled three years—and then, dear Kate, I came to you."

"And during those later years he was in India," she remarked, musingly.

"I think so," I answered; "at least, I never saw him."

"And this is all, Margaret—quite all—there are no suppressions?"

"None," returned I, smiling. "Since then, whenever I have seen Colonel Vaughan, you have been present."

The color deepened on her cheeks.

"You are very forbearing, Margaret: you do not taunt me with my interest in this subject—my most transparent interest." Then, sinking her voice almost to a whisper, she added, "Margaret, is there any hope for me? Do you think he loves you?"

"Me!" cried I, smiling a little sadly. "Why, Kate, you must be making fun of me to suppose that I could be your rival. May I say that I have guessed your secret long ago, and that it seems to me impossible that Colonel Vaughan can do otherwise than love you, if you will let him? But how can he ever divine the motive that influences your perpetual contradiction of all his wishes and opinions?"

She lifted up her face, which was flushed and animated.

"What shall I do then?" she asked, with a return of her accustomed vivacity. "Tell him I am dying of love for him? Somehow, Margaret, I think the *dénouement* must be near. Six weeks hence I shall be of age and my father's will will be read. There is some occult arrangement there that will bring matters to a climax."

"And have you no suspicion what it is?"

"Not the slightest," she replied, "except that I have always thought it probable that it pledges me to marry some one, and that if I do not do so I shall lose part of my fortune. I will marry no man on earth save one! Surely he cannot fail to understand my refusal."

Then she sat down on the cushion at my feet, and took my hand in hers.

"I have loved Colonel Vaughan," she said, "ever since I was a child and he used to visit my father in his last illness. My father, a stern, singular man, had an almost passionate regard for him. I believe he was indebted to him for some great service in past years, but I could never ascertain the nature of it. He used to keep him by his bedside for hours, and, though he would never suffer a clergyman to come near him, I know he sometimes lent a not unwilling ear to the prayers and Bible-reading of his

military friend. I used to creep sometimes to the door of an inner room and try to listen to what passed between them, being unconsciously much impressed by the combination of self-denial and devotion with the youth and social position of our hero. He never exhorts me, Margaret."

"Perhaps he thinks you too spoilt by praise to endure censure."

"Ah, he would find me strangely humble," she said, "if he would only drop the keen, sarcastic tone he never uses to any one but to me, and reprove and advise and beseech me with the earnestness of one who loved me. Why, Margaret, I could be equal to any sacrifice for his sake. I could go out with him as a missionary to Otaheite!"

"And when you next meet him, Kate," I returned, smiling, "you will—what shall I say?—insult him!"

"Well, well, Margaret, there is no chance of meeting him or giving him offence in Paris. We will stay where we are, dear friend, for the present, and then go back to the old house together, and meet our fate."

We went home about eight-and-forty hours before the period fixed for the reading of the will. The servants had received ample notice of our arrival, and had done their best to prepare and warm up the desolate old house for our reception; but a large family mansion, meant for numbers and hospitality, is a dreary dwelling for two solitary women, especially when situated on the outskirts of a comatose country town.

"We are so glad to see you home, ma'am," said the housekeeper, curtseying and smiling; "the place will seem alive now. The Colonel called this morning with Miss Vaughan to see that all was in fit order for your return, and left word that he would wait again upon you to-morrow."

"Then, Margaret," whispered Kate, "we will go to bed to kill time!"

But, instead of that, we sat up half the night over her dressing-room fire, conjecturing as to the terms of the will and the final upshot of affairs.

I was sitting in the breakfast-room the next morning, sipping a solitary cup of coffee—for Kate generally breakfasted in her own room—when Colonel Vaughan was announced. I was utterly disconcerted by this early visit and rose immediately with the intention of warning Kate to hurry downstairs.

"Don't disturb our heiress, Miss Hamilton, but indulge me with a cup of coffee and a few minutes' conversation. It was in the hope of securing this that I came so early. I knew Kate did not begin her day so soon."

I sat down, confused at my position, and crying shame upon my weak heart that I felt confusion. In spite of all I could do, the hand that held the coffee-pot trembled. I cast a frightened glance towards my companion, to see if he was watching me, but, to my infinite relief, he had drawn a chair towards the fire, and was gazing moodily into it.

"Margaret," he said, "have you and Kate had much talk about this will?"

My heart leaped up as he pronounced my name. Did he know that he had spoken it? Years ago, as a child, he had often called me by it; but in Miss Carrington's presence—and it was only in her presence that I saw him—I was always Miss Hamilton.

"A great deal of talk," I replied, "and, as the time draws near, conjecture becomes oppressive. I am thankful that to-morrow will end our suspense."

"Do you think—pardon my persistence, Margaret—do you think Kate has any idea of the terms of the will?"

He turned as he spoke, and looked straight into my face, and I perceived for the first time how pale and careworn he appeared. I grew pale with vague apprehension.

"I think she has an impression that some of the conditions will relate to her marriage. We shall all be better," I added, trying to smile, "when we know the exact truth, and are released from the torment of uncertainty."

"That remains to be proved," he said, smiling a little bitterly; then, after a pause, "can I have an hour's conversation with you, Miss Hamilton without interruption, and will you pardon me if I seem to press a few questions very closely?"

Now my ordeal was at hand. He was about to sound my knowledge of the heart of his capricious ward, that he might be better prepared for decision and action on the morrow. Well, if I could help forward the happiness of both, I would do it with all the skill at my command.

I told him we were safe from interruption, and that I was prepared to satisfy him on any point within my knowledge on which he desired information.

"As regards Miss Carrington," I added, "I shall only be too glad to bear my grateful testimony to the sweet, noble, womanly qualities which she chooses to hide from strangers by the affection of capricious self-will."

"I am scarcely a stranger," he rejoined—"and surely affection was never so determined and consistent. May I ask—in my capacity of guardian, of course—if Miss Carrington has added to her list of conquests since she has been in Paris? I will drop conventional phrases, Miss Hamilton; has she favored any new suitor with hopes of success?"

He tried to speak indifferently, but look and intonation betrayed the intense anxiety he felt.

"Emphatically no," I said. "Many, of course, had admired her, but she has not given the

slightest encouragement to any hope of her serious regard."

"And can you explain the phenomenon of a vain, ardent girl preserving her fancy free for so many seasons of fashionable life, till she might justly begin to fear that society would grow tired of her charms and her caprices together?"

"Society has not yet shown the least indication of either," returned I, rather dryly, for there was that in his tone which piqued me sorely on my friend's behalf, and excited a half-doubt in my mind whether my poor Kate had any ground for hope. In that case it behoved me to be tenderly careful not to compromise either her dignity or her pride. "May I venture to put a similar inquiry, Colonel Vaughan?" I added, "and ask you to explain the phenomenon of a sagacious and high-minded man having known Kate Carrington all these years, and discovered nothing below the surface of her charms and caprices?"

"I have never thought her heartless," he returned; "rather have I feared lest the arrogant indifference she shows to all may be assumed to hide some secret but concentrated feeling."

"Feared!" I faltered; for, in spite of my efforts, the reaction of belief produced by his present agitation was almost too great a tax on my self-command.

"Yes," he replied, evidently controlling himself with an effort, "feared—for this reason. I considered her future in a measure placed under my control, and myself responsible for the issue—Heaven knows not willingly! The infatuation of a dead man has been the burden—the curse of my life! Margaret, shall I tell you that I know the provisions of the will—have always known them—and that it is this circumstance which has made me so inexpressibly solicitous to find Kate a fitting husband before her twenty-third birthday—so cruelly divided between my desire to do my duty kindly by her, and the fear lest any untoward twist or turn of her fancy might incline her towards myself? It is possible this dread may have made me unjust towards her; tell me at least, Margaret, that it has made me the object of her irritation and dislike."

He did not think so. I could see by the aspect of concentrated though repressed anxiety on his face, by the quiver of the set lips, the gleam of excitement in the usually quiet eyes, that he was suffering intensely, and the fact appealed wonderfully to my sympathies.

What could I say? What ought I to do in so painful a dilemma? I had rashly given encouragement to hope where I saw for myself the signs of almost aversion. My intense sympathy for Kate, however, gave me the boldness to say—

"But why have you dreaded such a result, Colonel Vaughan? Is the love of a girl like Kate Carrington to be esteemed a burden and a curse? Ah, a light breaks upon me!" I faltered, speaking from the sudden conviction of the moment, and forgetting in my anguish the unbecoming freedom of my words. "You have some deep-seated attachment elsewhere, and hence this conflict of duty in your mind."

I broke off, startled by the sudden flush of color on my bold words produced.

"Just so," he replied, with that thrilling distinctness of enunciation which marks the exercise of a severe self-control—"just so! It is a conflict of duty. For many years—shall I count them?—when did we first meet, Margaret?—I have loved a woman the opposite of Kate Carrington in every gift, in every grace, in every endowment, mental or physical, and I feel for her at this moment not the passing heat of a boyish passion, excited by mere brilliant externals, but the quiet undying strength of a mature love. My personal happiness is, humanity speaking, in her hands, and years since I should have sought it from her had I not on the one side mistrusted my success, and on the other been withheld by the difficulty of my relations to Miss Carrington. Margaret, your voice shall decide my duty for me—one word will be enough—is blessedness or sacrifice to be my portion?"

He advanced a step, with a glance that kindled as he gazed at me, and tried to take my hand. Had the gray leaden skies which stretched beyond our windows suddenly opened and showed me a glimpse of Paradise, I could not have been more overwhelmed with astonishment. I felt confused, oppressed by a conflict of feelings, and could neither find words to speak nor strength to withdraw the hand he had seized in a passionate clasp.

"One word, one glance, Margaret!" he urged.

At the moment I heard Kate's step on the stairs and tore away my hand. What! Could I be so false a friend as to snatch away her happiness from her without even an hour's deliberation? I struggled for speech.

"She is coming," I said, "and must not know. I will write. I am too utterly taken by surprise to answer without thought—and yet I feel you do me too much honor."

I saw the contraction of pain cross his brow, and my heart bled inwardly; but the extremity of the occasion gave me courage.

When Kate entered, charming in the rare simplicity of her dress, I was able to tell her the reason of the Colonel's early visit without exciting any suspicion on her part and to excuse my own farther attendance, on the plea that they might have some private arrangements to make with reference to the reading of the will on the morrow.

On reaching my own room, I flung myself in a paroxysm of feeling on the bed, straining my clasped hands across my brow, and the waters of anguish and mental conflict went over my soul. I seemed to live over again in one con-

centrated sensation the experiences of my whole life as connected with Colonel Vaughan. I saw him as he appeared to me first—benign, dazzling in splendor and power of goodness to me, a miserable, discarded child; and since then with what fanatic zeal had I clung to every fresh revelation of the sweetness and nobility of his character and life!

Hitherto I had ruthlessly refused to hold parley with myself concerning the presumptuous love that I bore him, or rather had schooled myself to suffer. But now that he had told me he loved me—had loved me long—I had an excuse for giving my emotion free vent for a time.

I did so in convulsive sobs and tears, in foolish pressure of my feverish lips upon the hand so lately grasped in his, in vague dreams and passionate yearnings after what I still felt was impossible. For through all ran the overwhelming conviction that I could not accept his love. I could not blight Kate's life. I could not betray my benefactress. More than that, I was not worthy of him; though he, in his great ineffable goodness, thought I was. Quiet, unpretending, unendowed, I was no fit mate for his distinction and preeminence. No, much more akin to him were the radiant beauty, native gifts, and splendid accomplishments of his brilliant ward. Besides, what would be the intolerable anguish of her humiliation to find herself rejected for me—the confidant of her passion! It could not be. It must not be.

And yet, if he loved me, as he said he did, would he not in his turn suffer? For a brief while, till his infatuation were forgotten, and he could open his eyes to the blessedness awaiting his acceptance. For was she not good, sweet, pretty, loving him as purely as I loved him, though incapable of giving him up, as I would and could teach myself to do?

How long my painful conflict lasted I know not, but I was aroused by Kate's coming to the door.

"Let me in," she cried, impatiently, for the door was locked. "Colonel Vaughan is going, Margaret, and he has asked for you."

"Tell him I cannot see him," I replied, steadying my voice to its usual inflection. "I have a dreadful headache, and am lying down."

"If I say that," she returned, dryly, "he will insist upon coming up to prescribe for you; you know quackery is one of his hobbies! I shall tell him you are gone out," and she turned away.

I half sprang from the bed to call to her, but sank back again. The message would appear unworthy and ungracious. But might it not be better if I did? At least one conviction was borne in resistlessly on my mind. I must not see him—not trust myself to exchange word or glance till after the decisive events of the morrow. In some sense I should be obliged to them—not as regarded my ultimate decision, but in my means of conveying it to him.

That morrow—how was I to bear the suspense till then? I knew Kate would soon return; I gathered too, from the tone of her voice, that she was vexed and dissatisfied, and, unnerved as I was, I had my secret to guard from her. I arose, washed my hot hands and face, raised a speechless prayer to Heaven for strength and help, unfastened my door, and laid myself quietly down again.

As I expected Kate soon came back and entered the room. She gave me a quick searching look.

"Are you very unwell, Margaret?" she asked, and then, without waiting for my reply, went to the window and gazed out long and silently.

I could hear the sound of horse's hoofs, and knew she was watching him out of sight. Oh, the pathos there was in the yearning, passionate melancholy of her beautiful face!

"Have you—has he," I began, hesitating—

"finished the arrangements for to-morrow?"

"We have hardly mentioned them," she said—"I concluded he had discussed them with you. But there is not much to arrange. The will is to be read at noon; himself, his sister, my father's lawyer, and one or two personal friends are to be present besides myself, the victim, and you, my chaperon. I don't know that any ceremonies need attend the rite—at least beyond providing a bottle of sherry and a biscuit."

"And you forebore to speculate or to question him on the eve of the *dénouement*?"

"*Cui bono?*" she asked. "He would tell me nothing—and I did not court discomfiture. Ah, Margaret!" she went on, coming near me, and leaning with affectionate familiarity over my pillow, "he was cruelly silent and impenetrable this morning. Do you think any man could have such mastery over his feelings if he felt at all?"

"Surely," I said, turning away uneasily under her sorrowful gaze, "the same motives which have influenced him before would sustain him to the end."

"Is it a sin, a shame," she asked, "to love this man so well—so well that I could fain tell him that I love him, and beseech him, if he loves me not, to try hard to do so? If he will have nothing to say to me, I shall still go on loving him till they put me under the turf. I won't be such a fool as to add, in that case, that I don't care how soon the interment takes place."

I was silent, and she went on again.

"Heaven bless you, Margaret for letting me talk like this without scorning me! If I couldn't talk to you, my wild unchaste heart, as he would term it, would be ready to burst. I often ask myself angrily why I love him so much,

when he has scarcely ever spoken a kind word to me; but I think of the kind words, the good offices he has bestowed upon others; and, though I admire his handsome face, his gifts of mind and manner, I love still better the patience, the self-denial, the noble consistency which make of his daily life an example and a reproof. Ah, Margaret, he might make a good woman of me!"

She turned upon me her luminous eyes wet with tears—beautiful in her grief as no other woman ever was, it seemed to me. As I gazed at her with searching, stricken glance, my courage strengthened.

"I can bear it better than she," I said, "and he—must love her in the end!"

I half dreaded, half hoped, that he might make some attempt to see me again that day, but the hours wore on to night and I received no communication from him. Kate and I separated early. Each passed a restless feverish night and rose early and unrefreshed on the all-important morrow.

Hardly was breakfast over when Miss Vaughan was announced. In appearance and manner she was totally unlike her brother, seeming to the ordinary observer nothing but a formal, emotionless spinster. But I, who knew her as his willing supporter in all his past goodness to me judged her differently, and rose to welcome her with all the grateful cordiality I felt. Kate, on the other hand, was careless and sarcastic, being, as I could see, ill-pleased at so early a visit.

"Shall I ring for breakfast?" she asked, with affected eagerness. "Some chocolate and toast can be prepared in a few minutes."

"I breakfasted two hours ago," replied Miss Vaughan, "as you must have guessed, Kate, being acquainted with my habits; but I thought it well to come over and see if all was in readiness for this morning's serious business."

"Thank you," said Kate dryly; but she said no more. She felt the coming business to be too serious to give vent to her usual warmth.

Presently Miss Vaughan remarked, scanning her young hostess critically—

"I am very glad, Kate, to see you for once so simply and suitably dressed."

"I am not dressed," said Kate, haughtily, with her cheeks already afire at the implied censorship.

She wore a white morning wrapper, and her magnificent hair was bound round about her head; and I knew that it had been her intention to be present at the reading of the will in the same costume. However, she now thought proper to leave the room under the pretext that Miss Vaughan had reminded her of the duties of the toilet.

I followed her as soon as I could, having previously conducted Miss Vaughan to the dining-room, that she might see with her own eyes that all was duly prepared for the approaching ceremony.

I found Kate under the hands of her maid, with her loosened hair flowing around her, and a brilliant-hued robe on the bed.

"I will be your tire-woman to-day if you will let me," I said, anxious to dismiss the girl; and when she was gone I did my best, but in vain, to induce Kate to resume her simple dress, and to suffer me to confine her luxuriant tresses in modest order.

"No," she said, passionately; "why should I belie myself on this day, the turning-point of my destiny? Let me be my honest self, Margaret; at least, let me not trifle to her."

"But he," I urged, faintly—"you know he does not like this floating *chevelure*, and these pronounced colors."

She paused. Her cheeks grew carmine tinted, and then pale; her breast heaved with repressed emotion; she caught my hand and kissed it.

"Do with me what you like, darling," she murmured.

An hour after this we were all seated in the stately dining-room of the mansion, most of us drawn round the massive mahogany dining-table, which had groaned under the weight of so many sumptuous feasts in the lifetime of the man whose will we were now assembled to hear.

I sat like one in a dream, sustained only by the feverish elevation of feeling which may be supposed to enable the martyr to walk firmly towards the appointed stake.

Kate looked pale and calm, and superbly beautiful in her simple dress; she too had all her energies strained on the rack of patience.

Miss Vaughan watched her closely, and so did the two gentlemen who had come in company with her guardian. The former had known her father intimately, and herself from her cradle, and were full of comment and conjecture on what they were about to hear.

Colonel Vaughan had scarcely spoken, certainly he had not spoken to me, but had sat down at once at the bottom of the table, and waited without one overt sign of impatience while the lawyer fussed and prefaced and untied and unsealed with laborious exactness the small packet before him.

At length the page was opened and smoothed, and the voice cleared with elaborate scrupulosity, and he commenced to read.

I cannot recall the technical phraseology of the document, or give in words as lucid and succinct the provisions of the will. The substance of it, however, was that Mr. Carrington bequeathed to his only and beloved child Kate the entirety of all he possessed—on one sole condition, that, on reaching her majority—which he had protracted two years beyond the ordinary period, for reasons that satisfied his own judgment—she being still unmarried, and her guardian

Colonel Vaughan, being still unmarried, they two should pledge themselves within six months of the reading of the will to become man and wife. In this case it was his wish and prayer to his beloved child that she would, in prospect of the marriage aforesaid, make a legal settlement upon her future husband of the precise half of her property, and minute instructions were laid down to that effect.

Should Kate refuse to accede to this arrangement, she was, through such refusal, to forfeit the whole of the property, with the exception of three hundred pounds a year "for decent maintenance," and the residue was to be made over to Colonel Everard Vaughan, for his sole use and advantage.

If on the other hand, Colonel Vaughan refused to ratify the proposed alliance, Kate was to forfeit every shilling of her wealth, which was then to be devoted to the building and endowment of a lunatic asylum in his, the testator's, native town.

The will concluded with a statement that Mr. Carrington loved his daughter dearly, and, wishing to secure her future happiness, had planned the above arrangement in order to ensure her marriage with the man whom he most trusted and esteemed in the world, and that he had postponed Kate's majority in order to give her and her guardian likewise ample opportunity for consulting their own unfettered inclinations, concluding that, if both were free at the date specified, there could be no tyranny in thus disposing of their freedom.

There was something awful in the stillness which pervaded the stately room after the lawyer's voice had ceased. If I had not resolved to sacrifice my love before, I must have surrendered it now. Could Colonel Vaughan—the watchword of whose life was self-denial—consent to make the woman who loved him a pauper? Nay, had she been anything short of the vilest, that stringent and eccentric will left him no choice in honor but to take her as his wife.

I glanced at Kate, but her face was shaded by her trembling hands. I turned my eyes to look at him; stern and pale, he rose and advanced to the lawyer.

"That will cannot stand," he said, in a low, hard voice; "it bears unmistakably the marks of a mind unhinged. The provisions are simply—"

He hesitated, for Kate had dropped her hands from her face, and was looking at him, all unconsciously, with a wild despair in her appealing gaze.

"I, for one," said the lawyer, stiffly bowing, "am prepared to give my unequivocal testimony to the perfect soundness of the testator's mind at the time he made that will, and to congratulate Colonel Vaughan on the brilliant possibilities which it opens to him."

"Bravo, Sherrick!" said one of the other gentlemen, coming forward, having shaken off the first stupefaction of surprise. "Let us wish our gallant friend success with—Ah, the lovely bird is flown! Good omen, Vaughan: suffer me to play the host, and drink to the health of the provisional heiress."

With an almost convulsive effort at self-command, Colonel Vaughan steadied hand and voice, gulping down the proffered wine, and wishing Kate Carrington health and happiness in a fashion so like his ordinary manner, as to deceive all but the closest observer. But to me there was an inflection in his voice, a rigid pallor on brow and lips, that affected my heart with keenest anguish.

I was eager to follow Kate from the room, but Miss Vaughan laid her hand upon my arm, and forcibly detained me.

At this point the other gentlemen present seemed to perceive that the nominal business was concluded, and that they had no pretext for remaining longer in the absence of all encouragement or invitation to do so.

"I will see you and Miss Carrington later in the day, Colonel Vaughan," said Mr. Sherrick, blandly; "possibly I may have some instructions to receive."

The Colonel bowed courteously, and as courteously attended his friends to the door of the apartment, excusing the seeming want of hospitality on the sufficient plea of urgent business awaiting him; and, having paused for a minute to see them ushered out into the open air by the ceremonious old butler, who was on duty in the hall, he turned back to the table near which both his sister and myself were still standing.

During this interval I had renewed my attempt at escape, but in vain; Miss Vaughan still kept her hold upon my arm.

"Stay!" she whispered, authoritatively, and I dared not disobey.

"Everard," she said, in tones of almost maternal tenderness, as he drew near us and fixed a searching gaze upon my bowed head, "I know you love this girl. Heaven does not require of us to sacrifice the lawful happiness of our lives to a chivalrous punctilio. It is an unjust, an impious will, striving to attain its end by involving your honor and conscience; but for that you are not accountable. Change of fortune will be a salutary and needful discipline for poor Kate, and our kindness shall never let her feel it acutely. Speak to him Margaret!"

"Yes, speak to me," he said, maintaining a tone of strained self-command, and approaching me calmly, but with a calmness that wrung my heart more than any outburst of emotion could have done. Speak to me, Margaret, whom I have loved so silently and so long, and tell me that I have not loved in vain. Heaven knows," he added, with a faint smile, "that I am not stubbornly bent upon my own happiness; but yours is very dear to me. Tell me that I have it in my keeping—that it is my first, sweetest duty to consult it."

For a moment I hesitated. Should I shut the gates of love's Paradise against me and stand without, shivering in the cold of neglect and misconception? Worse, could I wound that noble heroic heart? "Yes, yes," I cried hurriedly to my falling courage; "I must, I can, with such alternative before me;" and so I spoke with a quiet, steady firmness that surprised myself.

"You do me too much honor, Colonel Vaughan; I have never dared to raise my hopes so high as to imagine that I could have part or lot in your happiness."

He looked at me searchingly, as if he would read my secret soul.

"You mean you do not love me, Margaret? Then I have been a gross fool for my pains. I thought a young girl's fresh heart was easy to win by pity and kindness—and I did my best to be kind to you. I loved you, Margaret, almost from the time I saw you first, when you stood sobbing by my side in sweet childish confidence, and told me all your troubles. I have waited all these years to speak, and now— you do not love me!"

He tried to take my hand and look into my face, but I drew back.

"I love you, Colonel Vaughan, as a girl rescued from such misery as mine ought to love and reverence so good and generous a friend as you; but I do not love you as—as—Kate Carrington loves you!"

He started back as if I had stung him, and his brow contracted.

"Oh, it is hard," he said, and pressed his hand over his forehead—"so sweet a dream, so distasteful a reality! At least, Margaret, you make my duty clear." He spoke a little bitterly, and his voice quivered for a moment, but he recovered himself immediately. "Charlotte," he asked, turning to his sister, "do you admit now that I have no alternative? This is the fear, the dread that had pressed upon me for years, and fettered all my actions, or, I half think, Margaret, I might have taught you to love me; and now the fulfilment is exacted from me!"

Miss Vaughan, in her turn, looked at me steadily, but I did not flinch.

"Poor girl," she said, "your becoming humility has marred your fortunes, and costs my brother much; but Heaven orders events. Do you say that this popinjay of a girl loves my brother?"

"With all her heart and soul and strength," I answered; "and she is not what you think her. Love and pride have made her capricious and contrary—I who know her thoroughly know her to be of a sweet, noble, reliant nature. Even you, madam, would scarcely condemn her to beggary of heart and fortune at a stroke!"

I had turned, once more resolute to escape from my fiery ordeal, and laid my hand on the lock of the door. He came forward to open it for me, and held me back for a minute, with a yearning, lingering gaze.

"Once more, Margaret—you could not learn to love me? You are quite sure that sacrifice, not blessedness, is my allotted portion?"

"You will find a higher blessedness in the sacrifice than in anything it might have been in my power to give," I said, unfalteringly, and he opened the door and let me pass.

Pass to what? To an agony and passion of grief which shook my purpose to its base—an immense self-pity—a fervid sympathy and love for him which seemed beyond nature to endure and conquer; yet I did conquer.

"Heaven pity and help him," I prayed from the depths of my breaking heart, "and her also! May she find favor in his sight!" and, as I sat and fought anew the painful fight against his happiness and my own, I was able still to maintain my belief that no other course was possible or honorable. Could he have endured, much less enjoyed life, knowing that he had relegated her to poverty, and misery? Or could I have rejoiced in a love purchased at such a price?

After an interval Miss Vaughan came to me.

"He is gone," she said; "he has left a message for Kate, requesting an interview to-morrow. I think he will tell her the truth—not all the truth," she added, as I started involuntarily; "but enough to vindicate his own sense of rectitude and save her from mistake. Perhaps she will not accept him on such terms."

I smiled. "She loves him," was my rejoinder.

He came the next day as appointed, and from my window I saw him enter the house. He chanced to glance upwards, and I shrank back confounded as our eyes met for the moment. There was no change of color, however; no spasm of emotion crossed his face as he made his accustomed salute. He looked as if he had fought the fight and already won the victory. He was pale perhaps, and a little wearied, to my keen, loving observation, but he was calm, self-contained and determined.

An hour later Kate, whom that morning I had not seen before, came into my room. I too had prepared myself for my martyrdom.

"Is it well, Kate?" I asked, eagerly.

Her face was pale with excitement, but her eyes were soft, tender, and suffused with tears.

"He says he does not love me, Margaret," she said, looking wistfully into my face. "What ought I to have answered?"

"That you will try to teach him to do so," I said, smiling.

She caught my hand and kissed it.

"Dear Margaret—sweet Margaret—I could not let him go; that was precisely what I made him understand."

They were married within the stipulated six months, and I think that Kate had partially taught her lesson by that time—at least, she believed she had. They went abroad, on a long, unconventional wedding tour, to Palestine, Algiers, Egypt, and then they had a long winter in Rome, and a gay sojourn in Paris.

Kate wrote to me, when they had made up their minds to come home, after a two years' absence, as follows:

"You would scarcely recognise my guardian in my husband, Margaret; he is no longer censor and contemner of all my little womanly foibles and caprices, but shows a large, loving indulgence for even my very faults, inclusive of an unworthy jealousy which has beset me, but shall never beset me again.

"I said to him last night, as he sat beside me after his return from a stroll—

"I have one question, Everard, to ask you, if I dare."

"Take courage, Kate; there are few things you dare not."

"Somehow, Margaret, this speech brought the hot color to my face, almost tears to my eyes. I fancied that he was thinking of my unwomanly wooing. He looked a little surprised at my emotion and then said, with that sweet, infinite kindness of look and manner which used to break my heart with love and yearning in the sad days gone by—

"Why, Kate, you could not think that my words implied a reproach! What I meant was simply this—that it requires no daring to speak freely to those who love us."

"And," faltered I, still blushing and hesitating, "you love me better now than—that other woman, I wanted to say 'Margaret,' but in spite of his assurance the word failed me, and I broke down in a stupid sob.

"I love you better than I ever loved any other woman, Kate," he said, gravely, and with a quiet earnestness of manner that thrilled me into a delicious stillness. "I could scarcely fail to love the woman who gave me the great treasure of her love when I esteemed it lightly, and since then has sacrificed her most cherished tastes, pursuits, and talents even to win the favor and approval of one who she knew loved her not. But your sweetness and kindness have long since conquered me, Kate; I had vowed before Heaven to love my wife, but I little thought how soon that duty would become my dearest privilege on earth. Believe me, dear, the girl I loved—and dearly I loved her—is nothing to me now but a friend whose hand I shall gladly clasp and willingly let go; but from you—even could I will it otherwise—nothing but death shall part me!"

If a throb of anguish smote me as I read, it was but a momentary weakness. If a passing smile at masculine adaptability curled my lips, I checked it. This was what I had hoped, expected, prayed for: she, under favoring circumstances, developing all the grace and fulness of her rich nature—he, heroic and faithful unto duty finding his crown of rejoicing where he had expected his cross of penance. And in deliberate gratitude I folded my hands over Kate Vaughan's letter, and gave Heaven thanks.

LOVE IN A COTTAGE.

A cottage, poetically speaking, is a small but picturesque domicile—embowered in roses and situated "near a wood"—adapted to the accommodation of three individuals—a gentleman, his wife, and a little boy with a bow and arrows and wings. Poesy assumes that a bridegroom who "no revenue hath" may live in a state of ecstatic bliss with a dowerless bride in such a residence. Subsistence is a secondary consideration. Bread and cheese and kisses are all-sufficient; and, in the absence of the grosser items, the epicurean food last mentioned is of itself excellent love-in-a-cottage fare. What cares Cupid for cates—cates with a C we mean, for cates with a K are a different matter. He laughs larders as well as locksmiths to scorn. He feeds on fancies, and, like his bilious brother Jealousy, grows by what he feeds on. Such at least is the sentimental notion of that spoony little divinity, as the guest of a cottage tenanted by a cashless pair.

But sober Prose—a bluff fellow that delights in throwing cold water on the beautiful and the tender—suggests that moneyless couples, who hope to retain love as a permanent lodger, had better look to their windows, out of one of which, if nothing for dinner comes in at the door, he is apt to fly. Any one who has seen a portrait of the boy Cupid, and noted his chubiness of outline, must know of course that he is no chameleon, to live on air. From a cottage, where there is nothing to eat, and more sentiment than industry and energy, he is pretty sure to make off at the first opportunity in search of cosier quarters—some shanty perhaps, where the vulgar garden grows cabbages and potatoes, and the interior atmosphere has an appetizing flavor of beefsteak and onions. There can be no doubt that "better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith;" but when it is all herbs and no ox the year round, disgust, if not hatred, will be very likely to take love's place at the board.

Upon the whole, therefore, substantial and permanent "wedded bliss" is scarcely to be hoped for in a cottage where there is more play for the imagination than the teeth.

A SHIP THAT SAILED FORTH.

Fresh blew the gale, free swelled the sail,
The sea on the shore beat loudly,
When seaward away, with pennants gay,
The Bark of my Love bore proudly.
Steered forth by Hope—each spar and rope
Trimmed taut by faith and devotion—
Fairly she sailed, till the land-wind failed,
And left her becalmed on the ocean.
But Love must ever with Fate agree;
What matters a calm on a summer sea?

The soft south wind sprung up behind,
And over the billows faster
She cheerily flew, like a wild seamew,
Nor recked of any disaster,
With Hope at the helm, in vain to o'erwhelm
The sea strained its strength to confound her,
Till afar through the night streamed the weird
Northern Light,
And the icebergs towered around her.
But Love must ever with Fate agree;
What matters a chill on an ice-bound sea?

The ice broke round with a thunder-sound,
The storm in its wrath raved loudly;
And once again o'er the heaving main
The Bark of my Love bore proudly.
With Hope still hard at the helm, and yard
And mast to their utmost bending,
She still bore free, till upon her lee
Was heard the wild breakers contending.
But Love must ever with Fate agree;
Why quail at a reef on a rioting sea?

Wedged, shattered, and tossed, lies the Bark on
the coast,
The seabirds her skeleton haunting,
Never again o'er the heaving main
To sail, with proud pennants flaunting.
With Hope lashed fast to the splintered mast,
And no longer by Faith commanded,
The fair Bark of Love no power can move
From the rock whereon she is stranded.
For Love must ever with Fate agree;
Who will care for a wreck on a lonely sea?

ENTER NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

One warm evening in July, two young men stood, engaged in earnest conversation, at the door of a handsome old house, situated on the outskirts of the town of Thornden. The taller of the two, Arthur Lester, possessing a fine thoughtful countenance, appeared to be pleading with his companion, Fred Crossley, two years his junior, and one of the most good-natured, warm-hearted individuals in existence.

"You won't go, Fred," urged Arthur, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "to that supper to-morrow night, will you? Say no, there's a good fellow, and I will give over lecturing—for the present."

"Ah, yes," said Fred, laughing; "you are safest with that qualifying clause."

"You may, perhaps, think it gives me pleasure to be continually harping on the same subject."

"I can't say I ever troubled myself to consider whether it did or not," replied he, stroking his moustache complacently; "but I have made up my mind to turn over a new leaf. You needn't smile; I'm thoroughly in earnest. You may depend upon me this time—there's no mistake about it," said he, with what was intended as his most impressive manner. "After to-morrow night, I give you my solemn word—"

"Be serious for once, Fred," said Arthur.

"Never more serious in all my life," was the rejoinder; only I really must go to that supper to-morrow, after the pressing invitation I have received, and passing my word to so many to be present."

"Well, Fred, never mind," said he, clapping him on the back; "I will take you on trust once more. 'After to-morrow night,' you say?"

"Yes, yes! on my word of honor," exclaimed Fred. "But I have a bright idea. Why not accompany me? You could then see that I behaved myself, and that I wasn't robbed, or worse, by the set of cut-throats you seem to imagine I am in the habit of consorting with. How would that suit you?"

"Absurd!" said Arthur.

"You have only to say you will go, and I will procure you an invitation. I didn't tell you, did I?" added he, a little consequentially, "that the supper is in honor of my return home?"

"Fred, Fred! what a foolish fellow you are!" exclaimed Arthur, impatiently, and yet with a regretful smile on his face. "Your return home means, to them, merely that you are prodigal of your riches. But I will say no more. I will go with you."

"That's right; you will be more considerate when you have once joined our set, mark my words." And so saying, with a graceful wave of the hand, he took his leave, his hat set jauntily on one side, humming an opera air to himself.

For a few minutes, Arthur stood at the door in deep meditation, when he was interrupted by a small hand being slipped into his; and, turning, he beheld Fred's sister standing by his side—a beautiful girl.

"Dreaming?" said she, looking up in his face with bewitching grace.

"I suppose so," replied Arthur, catching her face between his hands and kissing it; "but I am thoroughly awake now, so that if we are to have our promised walk, we had better start at once. The moon is just rising."

She looked up in his face inquisitorily, and

Arthur, in reply to her gaze, said, "I am going to the supper with Fred, dear."

She stopped short, and laying her hand upon his arm, said, with a beseeching look in her countenance, "Don't go, Arthur; please, don't go."

"What's the matter?" said he, smiling and viewing her fondly; "am I so dear to you that you cannot afford to let one night pass without my seeing you?"

"Perhaps you are," said she, blushing at the confession; "do you wish a better reason?"

"No, my love," said he, drawing her to him; "but I am not convinced that is the true reason. 'Tell me what it is, Rose, that you fear?'

For a few moments they went on in silence, then Rose, raising her head, shyly looked up in his face, and with the warm blood suffusing her face in blushes, said, "I fear, Arthur dear, for you. You must think it bold and unbecoming in me speak thus; but I cannot help it, Arthur, I must speak. I know that you would do anything to save Fred; but, Arthur, although I love my brother dearly, I cannot see you needlessly risk your own welfare for his, and say nothing."

"Rose, Rose, what an imaginative little creature you are, to be sure!" said Arthur, laughing. "As if I couldn't take care of myself for one night, or am likely to endanger my happiness for life by accepting the invitation to a supper!"

"It was very wrong and selfish of me to say what I did, Arthur, I dare say," said she, hiding her face on his breast.

"Never mind, my dear," replied he, stroking her hair. "You are a little nervous to-night, that is all. And now, do you remember what night this is?"

"What night?" asked she, with a mischievous smile struggling with her tears.

"You don't remember, I dare say," said he, taking a jewel-case from his pocket. "And you would like to believe, I suppose, that nobody knows your age, Rose, nor when your birthday comes round. But I knew, and did not forget. This is a little present which I hope you will accept with my heart-felt wishes for your future prosperity and happiness, my own dear Rose."

He put the case in her hand, as he spoke, and kissed her. As she received it, she touched the spring, the lid flew open, and a magnificent tiara of diamonds lay flashing and glittering in the moonlight.

As she stood looking at them, Arthur took the jewels out of the case, and, with a smile, put them on her head, holding her at arms' length to admire her. And, indeed, not a more perfect picture could well be conceived than the one formed by Rose, as she stood there, with the sombre woods for a background, while her head was crowned with the glittering jewels, and over all, enrobing her from head to foot, the soft, sweet moonlight falling like a bridal veil. For a few moments she stood with heaving bosom, then cast herself into his arms, murmuring, "Only with you, Arthur dear, can the years of my life be happy!"

"Bless you, my own dear, bright love!" said he, passionately kissing her upturned face; "you shall be happy if my life's devotion can make you so. But let us return; the air is chilly, and the hour gets late."

They turned, and hand-in-hand, retraced their steps till they reached the garden gate, where they parted—Arthur to take his way through the woods again, with a light heart, to his own home, some two miles distant from the town; and Rose to retire to the privacy of her own room, there to offer up the thanksgiving of a love-blessed heart to the Great Fountain of Love, and to beseech His favour and protection on behalf of him who was so dear to her.

The supper was a very brilliant affair—Fred, of course, being the lion of the evening. Arthur, as his friend, took the second place of honor; and although he had come with a prejudiced mind, ere the evening was far advanced, he began to consider he had been too hasty in his judgment respecting Fred's companions; besides, he was not without his weak points, and the revellers were not slow to perceive and play upon them. They worked things so well that Fred himself did not enter into the festivities with more seeming enjoyment than Arthur—all the while assuring himself it was for that evening and on that occasion only. But we never know our strength till we try it, and Arthur had over-estimated his. Before they broke up, Fred, oblivious of his promise to Arthur, had engaged himself for a dinner the day following; and Arthur, although annoyed at this fresh proof of Fred's fickleness, accepted an invitation to accompany him—still laboring under the delusion of doing good by his presence. The dinner led to a ball, the ball to several other suppers and dinner parties. The time soon came when Arthur ceased remonstrating with Fred—he could not exhort him to renounce those things he took pleasure in himself.

The agony of Rose, when, with a woman's instinct, she divined the change which had come over Arthur of late, was intense. She had a strong and brave heart, but it was nigh breaking when she saw the two she loved best on earth, next to her father, hastening on to their ruin, and she utterly unable to save them.

It was in the spring of the year, when, one evening, Rose sat in the parlour, awaiting Arthur. The hour struck, but he had not made his appearance; and for nearly two hours longer did she sit there in the growing dark, hoping he would yet come, and fancying every minute she heard his step up the gravel path leading to the house—but still no Arthur. Her father, coming into the room, rallied her on her preference for sitting in the dark, but said nothing regarding

the non-appearance of Arthur, who he knew had promised to call that evening.

"I was just thinking, my dear," said he, kissing her and patting her on the head, "we might go to the opera to-night, and hear the new *prima donna* there is so much talk about. What do you say—would you like to go?"

In utter weariness, she said, "As you please, father."

"Well, make haste and get ready."

They went. The house was crowded, the *elite* of the town having been drawn together to hear a new star. For a while Rose sat gazing listlessly at the performance, scarcely conscious of what was passing before her, until her attention was suddenly aroused by a disturbance in a box opposite. She raised her glass, and the first figures she took in were those of Fred and Arthur, with hair and dress dishevelled, and passion in their faces, struggling with each other, while their companions endeavoured to separate them. In a moment, ere she could give utterance to the cry that rose to her lips there was a roar from all parts of the house as a figure fell with a crash from the box to the orchestra.

"Father—father!" she cried, with a fluttering voice, "it is Arthur! Take me to him, father dear—take me to him!"

She clung about his neck in a paroxysm of grief, with colorless, quivering lips.

"My dear girl, who is it you mean?"

She did not hear him, but tottered towards the door as if to seek the object of her solicitude.

"Oh, Arthur, dear, I am coming!" she cried, and fell back insensible into her father's arms.

The whole house was now in an uproar. Without staying to use means of restoration there, and hardly knowing how to act, Mr. Crossley took Rose in his arms, and carrying her out, had her conveyed home at once, where, after a little, she recovered.

The following evening, Rose and her father sat in the drawing-room. She was still weak, and her father was doing all he could, with a heavy heart himself, to lighten hers, when the sound of a quick step approaching was heard; in a moment after, the door opened, and Fred entered the room. Hastily crossing over to where they sat, he knelt down before them, and clasped his head in his hands.

"Father and sister, forgive me," said he; "I have brought shame and disgrace upon you both, but say you forgive me, and, believe me, it will be different with me in future. I do not ask you to trust me; only forgive the past, and my coming life will prove the sincerity of my repentance."

"Fred, dear," said Rose, drawing his head down on her lap, and weeping violently, "don't kneel there. You know father and I forgive you."

"Heartily, my dear boy," said his father, grasping his hand and raising him; "let the past be forgotten as it is forgiven, and let us all look with hope to the future; and now, what of Arthur?"

Fred's face flushed, and tears of shame stood on his eyes as he turned to Rose, and taking her hand in his, said, "Rose, my dear sister, you have forgiven me the pain and sorrow I have caused on my own account; but how can I ask you to forgive all I have made you suffer on account of another? I was blind to the results of what I was doing, and only last night did I come to my senses. In a moment of passion, at some trifling remark he made—you saw the result?"

"Tell me all about it, Fred," said Rose, with trembling lips and her hands clasped before her.

"His arm is broken, Rose," said Fred, speaking calmly; "and I am thankful it was not worse. I called this afternoon to see him, but he left early in the day for the Continent, leaving a note to be forwarded to me, stating that he had got his arm set and would soon be all right again. But listen, my dear sister," said Fred, putting his arm round Rose tenderly, as she hid her head in his hands and gave vent to her pent-up grief in a flood of tears,—"listen to me, dear, for a minute. I know quite well—although it should not be so—that Arthur's displeasure is all centred in himself, and it is for that reason he has left home, believing, I daresay, that you and father can never forgive him; but to-morrow morning I mean to start off after him. If I find him, it will be strange indeed if he does not return with me."

"You are right, Fred, lad," exclaimed his father, his face beaming with pleasure at the promising aspect affairs were beginning to assume. "My dear," said he, sitting down beside Rose, and with the most confident air imaginable pointing off his statements on his fingers. "It is quite plain. You see—Arthur, the best of fellow, makes a slip, we will say—recovers himself—feels shame (I like him all the better for that, my dear)—imagines all his friends have turned their backs upon him, and runs away—is only to be reasoned with, and will return at once—somebody particularly glad to see him—particularly glad to see her—all made up, and everybody jolly to the end of the chapter. Isn't that it, Fred?" asked he triumphantly, and giving him a sly dig in the ribs. "What do you think, Rose?"

"That you are too saugine, father," said she, kissing him, and smiling, in spite of herself, through her tears.

"Not a bit of it," said Fred, "father is right, as you shall see very soon. But you know, father," said he, his old free-and-easy manner asserting itself again, "to do all this, I require your co-operation in the matter; in fact—"

"In fact, you will require some cash, I sup-

pose," said the old gentleman, with a knowing smile. "Ah, you rogue, how often have my ears been deceived with that same request, and with what miserable sensations have I been wheedled and coaxed into granting it! But those days are all over now—are they not, my boy?" There was a beseeching wistfulness in his voice and manner, as he laid his hand on Fred's shoulder, and said these words, that were very touching.

"They are, father—they are indeed!" replied Fred earnestly, taking him by the hand; "only wait."

"Well, well, boy; we were to say no more about it, and we won't. You shall have as much as you want, Fred, no fear."

Fred started next morning, and as he was bidding Rose good-bye, he asked if she had any message to send.

"Only this, Fred," said she—"that I have not changed. And if you like," added she, with a smile—for hope had again dawned in her breast—"you can say that unless he wishes me to come for him myself, he will return with you immediately."

"And so he will, my jewel. The fact is,"—lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper—"father and I have been arranging matters between us, and there is likely to be a double wedding when I come back; so you see how interested I am in the matter, if for no other reason. Good-bye, and look out for my speedy reappearance."

The months glided past till it wanted but a week of Christmas, when Fred returned—alone. Arthur left no clue to what route he would take.

"He wants to forget me—to forget us all," Rose said to herself, with a sigh. But she was a brave girl, and kept her sorrow to herself—bearing her own burden, and doing all she could to lighten that of others. The house was no full of visitors, and in attending to them she found sufficient occupation.

Christmas morn arrived at last—a genuine old-fashioned feast-day, the sun shining brightly, snow three feet thick, and everything *en suite*. Christmas of all seasons should be the happiest time of the year—no man entering into its spirit more thoroughly than Mr. Crossley. His delight knew no bounds. He was overjoyed, and appeared to be everywhere at once, and to be six Mr. Crossleys, at least, instead of only one.

When evening came, the fine old house seemed to have wakened up from its repose of a twelvemonth to do honor to the occasion. Lights gleamed from every window far above the snow, and flashed out as doors were opened and shut to admit the guests. Thornden House was no longer a mere dwelling, and Rose did her best to enjoy herself; but as the evening wore on, and festivities were at their height, she slipped quietly away from the throng, entered a warm little-room, where the lights burned low, and drawing her chair to the fire, she sat down, and began to think. That night, two years ago—how well she remembered it! Arthur and she had stood in this very room, listening to the carols without. Where was Arthur now? Oh, she longed to tell him that her heart was unchanged towards him—that all the mistakes of the past were forgiven and would be forgotten! Even as she sat thus, her heart going out in yearnings to him whose love was as dear to her as life itself, the voices of the singers broke upon her ear—

God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay;
Remember Christ, our Savior.
Was born on Christmas Day.

She went to the window, and listened. The snow had been falling heavily all the evening, with a boisterous wind howling, which tossed the ivy about outside the windows with a rustling sound, and whistled down the chimney in fitful gusts. How the voices of the poor singers trilled and trembled as the half-frozen notes were born across the snow! Rose's heart bled for the poor shivering creatures outside; so, slipping down stairs with purse in hand, she opened a side-door, near to where they stood. As she did so, a sudden gust threw the door wide to the wall, blinding and nearly suffocating her with snow at the same time. She had recovered her hold of the door, when the figure of a man approached, and she held out her hand with some money in it. For a moment he stood on the door-step, motionless; then, to her alarm, he took her gently by the hand, and ere she was aware, had led her in, and closed the door after them.

"Rose, don't you know me?"

"Arthur, my dear!" cried she, overcome with joy, and taking him into the room she had just quite!

"Am I, then, still dear to you, Rose?" asked he with trembling voice, while holding her hand in his; "can you say so from your heart after what has passed?"

"Arthur," said she, looking up in his face with a frank, loving smile, "believe me, you are all you ever were to me, and more. You may have sinned, and we all have, dear; but seek and obtain forgiveness from the only One who can forgive."

"I have, my dear—I trust I have," said he; "and I can never esteem myself too lightly for the particular occasion I had for doing so."

"Say no more about it, Arthur, dear; it is past." And she put on her old happy smile, passing her arms round his neck, and holding up her lips to be kissed.

"Bless you, my darling!" said he, drawing her to him; "I shall yet live, I hope, to redeem, in some measure, the unhappiness I have caused you."

"If there has been pain and suffering," Rose

remarked calmly, "it has also worked good. Fred has been saved to us; and now that you have returned, we shall be happier for it all."

Arthur explained that, after the night of the opera, the sense of his humiliating position so forced itself upon him, that he resolved to leave Thorden for awhile, if not altogether.

"Precisely what I said!" exclaimed Mr. Crossley, bursting into the room at that moment. "My dear Arthur, a merry Christmas to you! Where have you been? When did you come? How is your arm? How did you manage to elude Fred?" asked he, without taking breath, emphasizing each question with a thump on the back and a wring of the hand.

"I will answer your last question just now, and leave the rest for some future occasion. I have been ill, and for the last two months or so have been laid up in an obscure village in Switzerland, out of the usual route for tourists."

"Ill, Arthur, and from home, with no one beside you!" said Rose, pressing his hand and giving him another reproachful look.

"He will have to answer for it all, to us by-and-by," said Mr. Crossley, shaking his head at Arthur. "But I must leave you now, to run down to the kitchen for a minute. You know, there's no use expecting anything to be done unless one looks after it himself. I will send Fred to you." And with another hearty shake of the hand, he was rushing out of the room, brimful of importance, when Fred came rushing in, and a collision ensued.

"Don't apologize, my dear sir," said Fred, with imperturbable countenance—"pray don't apologize! I am not much hurt. I forgive you on this occasion, so that it do not occur again."

"Ah, you young scapegrace," exclaimed the old gentleman, wiping the perspiration from his forehead; "you have broken my spectacles, and you tell me not to apologize! But I suppose there's no use saying more about it."

And Mr. Crossley was right, for it was all lost upon Fred, who stood clasping Arthur's hand in both of his.

"It is all right between us, Arthur, boy, is it not?" said he, with an earnest look in his handsome, open countenance.

"It never was otherwise, my dear Fred," said Arthur, returning the cordial grasp of his hand. "I was as much to blame as you were—if not more so. Let us say no more regarding these mistakes, Fred, which both of us fell into, but rejoice that they have resulted in such a happy issue. And I know we shall not either of us forget the lesson of our past experience."

Nor did they.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

WESTERN TERPSICHORES.—A young lady in San Francisco had been dancing with a partner who evidently pleased her, and, wishing generously to share the pleasure, she introduced him to another lady, thus: "Mi-s Why, he whizzed me round the room so that my feet never touched ground, except when he quit his hold to take a new grab!"

HOW TO MAKE A LADY STICK OUT HER LITTLE FINGER.—The best way of securing this effect is to put on the finger in question a handsome diamond ring. The mere desire to display the diamond to the best advantage is sure to make the lady stick out her little finger in her most charming manner possible. When the effect begins to fall substitute another ring of greater brilliancy. Success must attend these repeated efforts.

DANGER FROM A COLD ROOM.—Fresh air is good always, but it may be too cool for health. Ventilation is important, but it will not be safe to secure it by opening windows in winter. People may be overzealous for an object, and push it to great extremes, as many think it unhealthy to sleep in a warm room in winter. Dr. Hall protests earnestly against sleeping in cold rooms, or opening windows in chambers during the winter.

A SCOTTISH minister being one day engaged in visiting some members of his flock, came to the door of a house where his gentle tapping could not be heard for the noise of the contention within. After waiting a little, he opened the door, and walked in, saying with an authoritative voice, "I should like to know who is the head of this house?" "Weel, sir," said the husband and father, "if ye sit down a wee, we'll maybe able to tell ye, for we're just trying to settle that point."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.—A treasure of a husband—carries the baby. A treasure of a wife—never asks for money. A treasure of a son—has money in the Funds. A treasure of a daughter—looks the same age as her mother; if anything, a little older. A treasure of a servant—runs to the post-office in less than half-an-hour. A treasure of a cook—is not hysterical whenever there is company to dinner. A treasure of a baby—doesn't disturb its "dear papa" in the middle of the night.

WHEN the British ships under Lord Nelson were bearing down to attack the combined fleet of Trafalgar, the first lieutenant of one of the ships, on going round to see that all hands were at quarters, observed one of the men devoutly kneeling at the side of his gun. Such an attitude in a British sailor exciting his surprise and curiosity, he went and asked the man if he was afraid. "Afraid?" answered the sailor; "no! I was only praying that the enemy's shot may be distributed in the same proportion as prize-money—the greatest part among the officers."

DISPERSING THE LADIES.—At Boulogne, during a Royal reception some years ago, a number of English ladies, in their anxiety to see every-

thing, pressed with such force against the soldiers who were keeping the line that the latter were forced to give way, and generally were—to use the expression of policemen—"hindered in the execution of their duty." The officer in command, observing the state of affairs, called out, "If they don't keep back kiss them all;" after the first sound of the drum the ladies took the flight. "If they had been French," said a Parisian journal, "they would have remained to a woman."

SPANISH GIPSIES.—It is impossible not to be struck by the originality and cleverness of the gipsies even in their vices. A gipsy-man was at confession one day; and, whilst he was confessing, he spied in the pocket of the monk's habit a silver snuff-box, and stole it. "Father," he said, immediately, "I accuse myself of having stolen a silver snuff-box." "Then, my son, you must certainly restore it." "Will you have it yourself, my father?" "I? Certainly not, my son!" "The fact is," proceeded the gipsy, "that I have offered it to its owner, and he has refused it." "Then you can keep it with a good conscience," answered the father.—*Wanderings in Spain.*

A FOOL'S MISTAKE.—No man in the world less knows fool than himself. Nay, he is more than ignorant, for he constantly errs in the point, taking himself for, and demeaning himself as towards another, a better, a wiser, and abler man than he is. He hath wonderful conceits of his own qualities and faculties; he affects commendations incompetent to him; he soars at employment surpassing his abilities to manage. No comedy can represent a mistake more odd and ridiculous than his, for he wonders, and stares, and hunts after, but never can find, nor discern himself, but always encounters a false shadow instead thereof, which he passionately hugs and admires.

DIAMONDS THAT ARE HISTORICAL.—Of the diamonds of historical size the potentates of Europe are the possessors of almost all, the following being the names of the more celebrated:—The Sultan of Matan, 360 carats; the Regent, 135 carats; the Koh-i-noor, 186 carats; the Orloff, 195 carats; the Sanci, 54 carats. The last mentioned has survived adventures enough to merit a detailed account. Nurtured on the breast of Charles the Bold of Burgundy, from him it passed to the Sanci, and was christened. It next turns up among the crown jewels of France, assisting at the coronation of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., and disappearing at the sack of the Tuilleries. Ferdinand VII. of Spain afterwards became its owner, his queen giving it to Godoy, Prince de la Paix, from whom it passed to several unimportant hands, until an East India nabob, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, of Bombay, secured it by purchase for £20,000.

MARRYING FOR MONEY.—An extremely sharp and intelligent American gentleman from the West once walked into the office of Doctor C. T. Jackson, the chemist. "Doctor Jackson, I presume?" said he. "Yes, sir." "Are you alone?" "Yes, sir." "May I lock the door?" And he did so; and, having looked behind the sofa satisfied himself that no one else was in the room, he placed a large bundle, done up in a yellow bandanna, on the table, and opened it. "There, doctor, look at that." "What?" said the doctor, "I see it." "What do you call that, doctor?" "I call it iron pyrites." "What?" said the man—"isn't that stuff gold?" "No," replied the doctor, "it's good for nothing; it's pyrites." And, putting some over the fire in a shovel, it evaporated up the chimney. "Well," said the gentlemanly man with a woebegone look, "there's a widder woman up in our town has a whole hill-full of that, and I've been and married her."

A WORD ABOUT MARRIAGE.—A physician writes the following sensible advice: "My profession has thrown me among women of all classes, and my experience teaches me that God never gave man a greater proof of his love than to place woman here with him. My advice is:—Go—propose to the most sensible girl you know. If she says yes, tell her how much your income is—from what source derived—and tell her you will divide the last shilling with her, and love her with all your heart in the barg in. And then keep your promise. My word for it she will live within your income, and to your last hour you will regret that you did not marry sooner. Gentlemen, don't worry about feminine extravagance and feminine untruth. Just you be true to her, love her sincerely, and throw it up to her frequently, and a more fond, faithful, foolish slave you will never meet anywhere. You won't deserve her, I know, but she will never see it. Now throw aside pride and selfishness, and see what will come of it."

A FORTUNE IN ITSELF.—Civility is a fortune in itself; for a courteous man generally succeeds well in life, and that even when persons of ability sometimes fall. The famous Duke of Marlborough is a case in point. It was said of him by one contemporary, that his agreeable manners often converted an enemy into a friend; and by another, that it was more pleasure to be denied a favor by his Grace than to receive a favor by most men. The gracious manner of Charles James Fox preserved him from personal dislike, even at a time when he was politically the most unpopular man in the kingdom. The history of every country is full of such examples of success obtained by civility. The experience of every man furnishes, if we may recall the past, frequent instances where conciliatory manners have made the fortunes of physicians, lawyers, divines, politicians, and, indeed, individuals of all pursuits. In being introduced to strangers, his affability, or the reverse, creates instantaneously a prepossession in behalf of, or awakens unconsciously a prejudice against him.

A HERO.—A man who had recently been elected a major of militia, and who was not overburdened with brains, took it into his head on the morning of parade to exercise a little by himself. The field selected for this purpose was his own apartment. Placing himself in a military attitude, with his sword drawn, he exclaimed:—"Attention, company! Rear rank, three paces, march!" and he tumbled down into the cellar. His wife hearing the racket, came running in, saying, "My dear, have you killed yourself?"—"Go about your business, woman," said the hero; "what do you know about war?"

SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.

TO CLEAN KID GLOVES.—Lay the gloves on a clean folded towel. Dip a piece of clean flannel into some milk and rub well with brown soap and scour the glove towards the fingers. When thoroughly rubbed lay them on the grass to dry.

PAINT AND GREASE.—An excellent recipe for removing paint or grease spots from garments may be had by mixing four tablespoonsfuls of alcohol with a tablespoonful of salt. Shake the whole well together, and apply with a sponge or brush.

FURNITURE POLISH.—An excellent furniture polish is made with one pint of linseed oil, and about half a gill of alcohol, stirred well together and applied to the furniture with a linen rag. Rub dry with a soft cotton cloth, and finish with an old piece of silk.

TO WHITEN FLANNEL.—Flannel which has become yellow with use may be whitened by putting it for some days in a solution of hard soap to which strong ammonia has been added. The proportions given are one pound and a half of hard curd soap, fifty pounds of soft water, and two-thirds of a pound of strong ammonia. The same object may be attained in a shorter time by placing the garments for a quarter of an hour in a weak solution of bisulphate of soda, to which a little hydrochloric acid has been added.

A REMEDY FOR CHILBLAINS.—One ounce of tannic acid is to be dissolved in about a pint of water, and four scruples of iodine in a sufficiency of concentrated alcohol. The two solutions are then mixed together, and enough water is added to make up two pints of fluid. The best time for using the remedy is on going to bed. The solution is placed on a slow fire in an earthen or china vessel; the part affected with chilblains is then introduced into the fluid, and is to be kept there until the liquid becomes too hot to be withdrawn, and to be dried by being kept near the fire. When chilblains are ulcerated it is best to diminish the quantity of iodine.

HUMOROUS SCRAPS.

TWENTY-SEVEN Nashville ladies determined to practise economy, vowed not to wear anything more expensive than calico dresses to church; and they stuck to it, as none of them have attended church since.

THERE are seven ladies on the staff of the Chicago Balance a monthly paper, and their remarks only cover eight pages. It is wonderful how they keep their balance with so little scope for the expression of their feelings.

AN absent-minded man entered a shoe-shop the other day, and wanted his boy measured for a pair of shoes.—"But where's the boy?" asked the shopman.—"By George!" exclaimed the man, "I've left the boy at home. I'll go and get him," and off he started for his home, six streets away.

EXTRAVAGANT DRESS.—"Speaking of extravagance in dress," writes Captain Crossley, "the most expensively dressed man I ever saw was an African chief on the Gold Coast. His wives had anointed him thoroughly with palm-oil, and then powdered him from head to foot with gold dust. You never saw in your life a man go up so utterly regardless of expense."

DOCTOR AND PARSON.—A certain young clergyman, modest almost to bashfulness, was once asked by a country apothecary of a contrary character, in a public and crowded assembly, and in a tone of voice sufficient to catch the attention of the whole company, how it happened that the patriarchs lived to such extreme old age. To which question the clergyman replied, "Perhaps they took no physic."

ILL-BOUND.—A celebrated had Scotch divine, just risen up in the pulpit to lead the congregation in prayer, when a gentleman in the front of the gallery took out his handkerchief to wipe the dust from his brow, forgetting that a pack of cards was wrapped up in it. The whole pack was scattered over the floor of the gallery. The minister could not resist a sarcasm, solemn as the act was in which he was about to engage.—"Oh, man, man! surely your psalmbook has been ill-bound!"

BY THE CARD.—It happened that Swift, having been dining at some little distance from Laracor, his residence, was returning home on horseback in the evening, which was pretty dark. Just before he reached a neighboring village his horse lost a shoe. Unwilling to run the risk of laming the animal by continuing his ride in that condition he stopped at one Kelly's, the blacksmith of the village, where, having called the man, he asked him if he could shoe a horse with a candle. "No," replied the son of Vulcan; "but I can with a hammer."

A HERO.—A man who had recently been elected a major of militia, and who was not overburdened with brains, took it into his head on the morning of parade to exercise a little by himself. The field selected for this purpose was his own apartment. Placing himself in a military attitude, with his sword drawn, he exclaimed:—"Attention, company! Rear rank, three paces, march!" and he tumbled down into the cellar. His wife hearing the racket, came running in, saying, "My dear, have you killed yourself?"—"Go about your business, woman," said the hero; "what do you know about war?"

CAISSA'S CASKET.

SATURDAY, April 4th, 1874.

* * * All communications relating to Chess must be addressed "CHECKMATE."

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM NO. 47.

By W. A. SHINKMAN.

White. Black.

1. B to K B 4th 1. Any

2. Q mates.

Correct solution sent on by L. S., Quebec.

SOLUTION TO PROBLEM NO. 48.

By W. A. SHINKMAN.

White. Black.

1. R to Q Kt 5th 1. Any

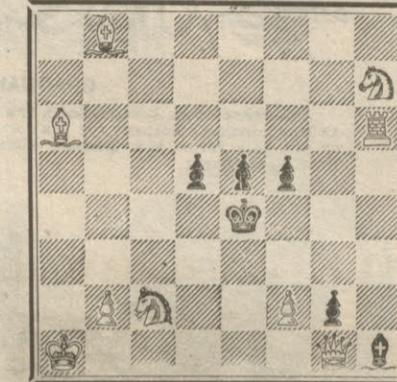
2. Mates acc.

Correct solution received from L. S., Quebec.

PROBLEM NO. 55.

By F. W. MARTINDALE.

BLACK.



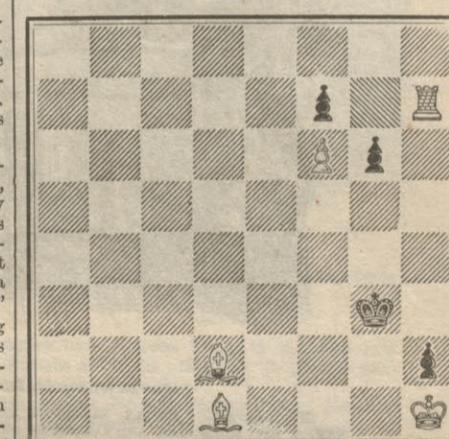
WHITE.

White to play and mate in two moves.

PROBLEM NO. 56.

By JACOB ELSON.

BLACK.



WHITE.

White to play and mate in three moves.

\$3.00 LORD BROUGHAM TELESCOPE.

Will distinguish the time by a church clock five miles, a FLAGSTAFF and WINDOW BARS 10 MILES; landscape twenty miles distant, and will define the SATELLITES of JUPITER and the PHASES OF VENUS, &c., &c. This extraordinary CHEAP and POWERFUL glass is of the best make and possesses ACHROMATIC LENSES and is equal to a telescope costing \$20.00. NO STUDENT OR TOURIST should be without one. Sent Post free to all parts in the Dominion of Canada on receipt of price, \$3.00

H. SANDERS,

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AVOID QUACKS.

A victim of early indiscretion, causing nervous debility, premature decay, &c., having tried in vain every advertised remedy, has discovered a simple means of self-cure, which he will send free to his fellow-sufferers. Address, J. H. REEVES, 78 Nassau St., New York.

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GRADUAL EXTINCTION OF THE LATIN RACE.

IN ANSWER TO AN ADVERTISEMENT, THE BLOND HERR PATATENKOFF AND THE DARK-EYED SIGNOR GUSBERITARTI APPLY TOGETHER AT MISS ROSELEAF'S ACADEMY FOR THE POST OF MUSICAL INSTRUCTOR TO THE YOUNG LADIES. VERY MUCH TO THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HER FAIR PUPILS, MISS ROSELEAF COMES TO THE CONCLUSION THAT GERMAN MUSIC IS THE SAFEST, AND PRUDENTLY SELECTS HERR PATATENKOFF.



"HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY."

Host (really in agony about his polished inlaid floor). "HADN'T YOU BETTER COME ON THE CARPET, OLD FELLOW! I'M SO AFRAID YOU MIGHT SLIP, YOU KNOW."

Guest. "O, IT'S ALL RIGHT, OLD FELLOW—THANKS! THERE'S A NAIL AT THE END, YOU KNOW!"



"OH!"

(Algernon is devoted to Science, and makes his young bride read all the new Scientific Books to him.)

Mrs. Algernon. "REALLY, ALGERNON, ALL THIS ABOUT DIFFERENTIAL AND INTEGRAL CALCULUS, AND BIOSTATISTICS, AND BIODYNAMICS, AND MOLECULES, AND CONCRETES AND THINGS, SEEMS TO ME RATHER EXTRAORDINARY! YOU CAN'T GENERALLY ACCUSE ME OF PRUDISHNESS, BUT IS THIS THE SORT OF BOOK THAT MAMMA WOULD QUITE APPROVE OF MY READING, LOVE?"



MUSIC AT HOME.

Mistress (who can't bear Kitchen Music). "ISN'T THAT COOK, MARY, SINGING 'THE MINSTREL BOY'?" Maid. "YES, MA'AM."

Mistress. "I WISH TO GOODNESS SHE'D LEAVE OFF!"

Maid. "YES, MA'AM—SO DREADFUL OUT OF TUNE ONE CAN'T JOIN IN, MA'AM!"



THE MOMENTOUS QUESTION.

Eligible Bachelor. "SHALL I FOLLOW YOU UP, ANNIE; OR LEAVE MYSELF FOR LIZZIE?"



CRASS IGNORANCE.

First Swell. "LET'S SEE—TO-MORROW'S—WHAT'S T'DAY, BYTHEBY?"

Second Swell. "TUESDAY, ISN'T IT!—OR MONDAY?—IS YEST'DAY SUNDAY? JE' MIND—(YAWN)—MY MAN'LL BE HERE PWSENTLY—PWECIOUS SHWEWD FELLOW—TELL US LIKE A SHOT!"